

# the nimzo- Indian rubinstein

the ever popular main lines with 4 e3



EVERYMAN CHESS

Angus Dunnington

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by Angus Dunnington

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# BIBLIOGRAPHY



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## Books

*ECO*

*NCO*

*The Nimzo-Indian 4 e3*, Carsten Hansen (Gambit)

This last book is an excellent reference work for anyone unintimidated by multiple lines, variations and sub-variations. The reader should note that – unless stated otherwise – any mention of Hansen in the following pages refers to the meticulous FIDE Master Carsten Hansen.

## Electronic

*TWIC*

*ChessBase MegaBase*

## Acknowledgements

As usual over the years I would like to thank my friend and editor Byron Jacobs for his patience which, this time, was particularly appreciated as the Dunnington family found themselves moving house during 2003, a process that proved rather more complicated than expected. To this end I should also acknowledge my parents – whose house was used as long-stay hotel, office and baby's play area during much of this time.

# INTRODUCTION



1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♞c3 ♠b4 4 e3

The Nimzo-Indian Defence is interesting in that after only three moves Black has developed two pieces whereas White has only the knight on c3 – and even this is pinned. Not surprisingly ‘defence’ is considered by many an inaccurate tag because a number of lines are quite aggressive, with Black fighting for the initiative from the off-set, and this explains why the Nimzo is popular at all levels.

Of course White can chicken out with 3 ♞f3, but bringing out this knight first ignores the important e4-square (and the related d5) and is therefore not as taxing for Black. Moreover, there is no shortage of systems against the Nimzo (most players can expect to try out more than one line before hitting on a favourite), with 4 g3, 4 ♖c2, 4 f3, 4 ♠g5 and 4 e3, for example, all enjoying varying degrees of support over the years, each leading to different types of middlegame.

However, what sets 4 e3 apart from the rest is its flexibility – White is likely to play the sensible e2-e3 at some point in the early stage of the opening and doing so here leaves Black in the dark as to what piece configuration is to come. Black, for his part, is given the opportunity to steer the game some way down a direction of his own choosing. Consequently both sides tend to find themselves – more than once – being able to influence the progression of the game, and it is this fluidity that makes for an abundance of what I would call ‘real’ positions in which an understanding of key concepts and an appreciation of the relationship between pawns and pieces play a more significant role than is the case in some of the more well defined, restrictive opening systems such as the Stonewall Dutch or Advance French, for example.

It is a (sad) fact of chess life these days that, despite the fact that chess is a game which should essentially be fun, we know that computer databases, analysis modules, magazine articles, books and so on are part of the opponent’s armoury and considered a must if any degree of competitive success is to be hoped for (and we are trying to win, after all). With this in mind I have endeavoured to provide coverage, in some detail, of what I consider to be the more important lines available to both sides. As usual I have concentrated also on important positional and structural factors as well as those themes which connect certain aspects of the opening to relevant issues in the middlegame and beyond. This is because – as those of you familiar

with my other books will be well aware – I believe it is imperative that we contemplate, study and become well acquainted with the fundamentally key problem of how to play decent chess, regardless of the specific subject matter in front of us. Therefore for a ‘fool-proof’ repertoire you should use this book in conjunction with other sources of information. White players, for instance, will not find 4...♟c6 or other lesser 4th move alternatives for Black in these pages, but I am confident that playing through the examples will set you up well for a deeper understanding of the popular, conventional situations that arise – an approach that has proved useful thus far.

Before diving in, here is a brief layout of what follows, the book being split up into three parts, dealing with 4...b6, 4...c5 and 4...0-0 (with an early ...d7-d5) respectively.

With **4...b6** Black should remember not to automatically follow up with the fianchetto in the event of 5 ♟e2 as the c4-pawn provides an early target – hence 5...♟a6 as the main choice. White tends to be invited to advance in the centre in these lines, Black’s initial push of the b-pawn in a way announcing that pieces rather than pawns will be used to monitor the centre.

After the more conventional ♟d3 and ♟f3 the e4-square is obviously important, so ...♟b7 fits in. Again Black prefers to use pieces rather than pawns in the centre, but it is possible to simply stake a claim with ...d7-d5, when Black must be prepared to see his bishop’s view obscured after c4xd5 e6xd5.

**4...c5** is quite different and can itself lead to varied play as the middlegame approaches, depending on how White reacts on his fifth move. After ♟e2 the layout in the centre can take more than one form. For example 5...cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 a3 ♟xc3+ 8 ♟xc3 dxc4 leaves White with the IQP, while dropping the bishop back with 7...♟e7 invites 8 c5. White also has 7 c5, when the d4-pawn is then backward (and isolated after ...b7-b6, c5xb6), but the idea is to adopt a space-gaining, clamping approach.

This time (4...c5) 5 ♟d3 ♟c6 6 ♟f3 ♟xc3+ 7 ♟xc3 d6 (Hubner Variation) produces an entirely different flavour in the centre. Black hopes to exploit the blocked centre that results from 8 e4 e5 9 d5 with the extra knight, a situation White can avoid by holding back his pawns in order to maintain the tension and leave the position more open. Of course structural considerations must be taken into account whatever the opening, but the various plans and choices available to both sides after 4...c5 give such factors greater significance here than with the more predictable 4...b6 lines.

Part 3 deals with **4...0-0** followed by a quick ...d7-d5. Once again 5 ♟e2 is an option that, albeit ostensibly over-cautious, is bound to gain in popularity. Then 5...d5 looks sensible, planting the pawn in the centre, and this is also logical in the case of 5 ♟d3 d5. Here 6 ♟e2 is tidy, White settling for an IQP position (e.g. 6...c5 7 cxd5 cxd4 8 exd4 ♟xd5) with c3 offered extra support but with less control over e5. To many players White’s king’s knight belongs on f3, where it is a little more actively placed. Apart from this development being more popular, it is also seen more often because the typical positions can be reached via numerous move orders and openings (which is not the case with ♟e2). Speaking of transpositions, we should not forget that these can be expected in several lines, particularly between Parts 2 & 3, where both ...c7-c5 and ...d7-d5 can feature.

Anyway, returning to ♟d3 and ♟f3, White must be prepared in these ...d7-d5 lines when not concerning himself with c3 to see his centre change from, for example, an IQP (after ...c5xd4, c3xd4) to the pawn duo on c3 and d4 after ...♟xc3, b2xc3. Then c3 can become a new target, as well as the c4-square, while after c3-c4 the ‘hanging’ pawns on c4 and d4 can

take on a rather menacing air. Finally, the 'main' line sees Black holding back the c5-pawn so that ... $\text{d5xc4}$  leaves c3-d4-e3 for White and c5 and e6 for Black, a subsequent e3-e4 and ...c6-e5 mounting the tension in the centre.

The recurring themes throughout are structure and the centre, with emphasis on several key squares. Both sides have the facility to take the game in this or that direction, and it is by no means unusual to approach the same variation from a different perspective from game to game.

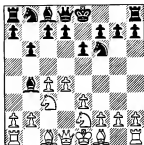
Incidentally I suggest using one chess set to keep a track of the moves and another with which to analyse, while over recent years some of the more dedicated readers have told me that they key everything into ChessBase. Anyway, whichever side of the board you intend to be sitting on, I hope that you both enjoy and learn from the games that follow...

Angus Dunnington,  
October 2003



# CHAPTER ONE

## 4...b6: White Plays 5 ♖e2



1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♖e2

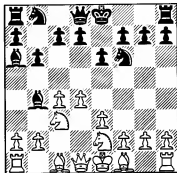
As we will see throughout this book the lines with an early ♖e2 are becoming particularly popular, not least because immediate support is offered to the pinned knight. In this case, with 4...b6, bringing the knight to e2 invites Black to attack the c4-pawn with 5...♗a6, which is the subject of Games 1 and 2. In Game 1 (which also features the automatic 5...♗b7) White plays 6 ♖g3, ignoring the c3-knight in favour of kingside mobilisation and (more often than not) activity in the centre that revolves around the sacrifice of the c4-pawn. Game 2 is more like we would expect from 5 ♖e2, White following up with the more sober 6 a3, putting the question to the bishop. Yemelin elects to trade on c3 and continue the pressure against c4, while 6...♗e7 refuses to hand over the dark squares (notably the a3-f8 diagonal) and leaves the knight on e2 in need of a new role. Game 3 is quite different, Black's 5...♖e4 bringing another piece to monitor c3. Black is willing to give away some territory, but this 'lead' can be a double-edged sword for White.

Addressing the prospect of doubled c-pawns, White's first intention is to sort out the pin – or at least induce a commitment

from Black that fits in with an aggressive strategy involving ♖g3.

### Game 1 Lautier-Nikolic Wijk aan Zee 1997

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♖e2 ♗a6

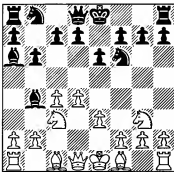


Regardless of whether Black takes on c3 or drops back to e7, the argument for selecting this diagonal for the other bishop is quite logical, and club players who automatically continue ...♗b7 are missing out on some interesting chess. Moreover 5...♗b7 fails to trouble White, e.g. 6 a3 ♗e7 (6...♗xc3+ 7 ♖xc3 d5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 b4 is a comfortable

advantage to White) 7 d5 0-0 8 e4 d6 9 g3 c6 10 dxc6 fxe6 11 ♖d4 ♙c8 12 ♙h3 e5 13 ♙xc8 ♜xc8 14 ♗f5 ♜e6 15 ♙g5 or 8...♞e8 9 ♗g3 exd5 10 cxd5 ♙d6 11 f3 with an unenviable position for Black in either case.

The c4-pawn is often a target in the lines where White is saddled with two c-pawns, but the main idea behind ...♙a6 is to eliminate White's traditionally better bishop by contesting the f1-a6 diagonal with ...d7-d5, after which Black should be well placed to operate on the light squares. White has two quite different main moves in the diagram position, namely 6 ♗g3, with a view to erecting a broad centre, and 6 a3, putting the question to the bishop.

### 6 ♗g3



So White doesn't mind doubled pawns after all. Instead he looks to the centre and, in the case of ...♙xc3, the dark squares, thanks to the fact that doing without a2-a3 leaves the a3-f8 diagonal free for the bishop.

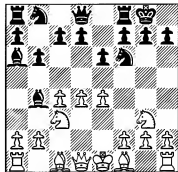
### 6...♙xc3+

Before investigating Black's major alternative, 6...0-0, here are a few other options. Despite the fact that it loses immediately, 6...d5?? 7 ♜a4+ has been seen in international competition and is no doubt less rare at club level. In Kamnik-Lukov, Cappelle la Grande 1996, Black avoided the dubious distinction of being known for the rest of his career as the GM who once lost a game in seven moves, the dapper Bulgarian postponing the

inevitable for a short while, throwing in the towel six moves later: 7...b5 8 ♜xb4 bxc4 9 b3 c5 10 ♜xc5 ♗bd7 11 ♜a3 ♜c8 12 ♙d2 ♗b6 13 e4 ♙b7 1-0.

In reply to 6...c5 the logical 7 d5 gains space and addresses the centre in a positive fashion. Then 7...exd5 8 cxd5 ♙xf1 9 ♜xf1 0-0 10 e4 ♞e8 11 f3 ♙xc3 12 bxc3 d6 13 ♙g5 ♗bd7 puts the onus on White to make something of his territorial advantage and, with the king on f1, the following plan makes sense: 14 h4 h6 15 ♙f4 ♗e5 16 ♞h3 ♜d7 17 h5 ♜h7 18 ♗f5 with g2-g4 and so on to follow, Geller-Matanovic, Zagreb 1958.

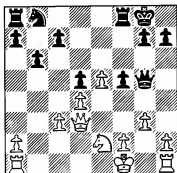
6...h5! is the knee-jerk reaction to the arrival of the knight on g3. After 7 h4 (why allow Black his wish?) 7...♙b7 8 ♜d3 d5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♜c2 e5 11 a3 exd4 12 axb4 dxc3 13 bxc3 ♗bd7 14 ♗f5 0-0 15 ♙b2 ♗e5 White had the dark squares to look forward to in Knaak-Bronstein, Tallinn 1979, although Black was doing well on the light squares. 6...0-0 gives the game a different flavour to the main line with 6...♙xc3+, casting giving White time to erect a broad centre with 7 e4



White gets what he wants in the form of the imposing centre but at the cost of development. Obviously Black has no intention of sitting idly by until he is pushed off the board, and each of the main candidates in the diagram position involves pushing with ...c7-c5, ...d7-d5 or ...e6-e5.

After 7...c5 8 d5 exd5 9 cxd5 Black should transpose to 6...c5 7 d5, above, with 9...♙xf1 10 ♜xf1 rather than be lured into 9...♚xc4? 10 ♚gx4 ♞e8 11 ♙xa6 ♙xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♚xa6 13 ♖a4, while 8...♞e8 9 f3 d6 10 ♙e2 exd5 11 cxd5 ♙xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♙xe2 13 ♚xe2 ♚bd7 14 0-0 b5 is approximately equal.

7...d5 is more aggressive and can be awkward to meet. 8 e5! ♚e4 9 ♚gx4 dxe4 10 a3 (10 ♙e3! c5 11 a3 has been suggested as favouring White, but 10...♚c6 should improve) 10...♙xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♚c6 12 h4 f6 13 ♖c2 ♚a5 14 ♖xe4 f5 15 ♖f4 ♙xc4 was seen in Kjeldsen-Brynell, Skaenninge 1998, and this looks good for Black, who continued to pressure the centre after 16 ♞h3 ♙xf1 17 ♜xf1 c5. Instead 8 cxd5 ♙xf1 9 ♜xf1 rids White of the potential problem on c4 and adds a little weight to his kingside prospects by bringing the e6-pawn to d5. Black has then tried 9...♙xc3 10 bxc3 exd5, when 11 ♙g5, evaluated as slightly better for White by Euwe, is equal according to Wells after the subsequent 11...dxe4 12 ♚xc4 ♚bd7 13 ♚xf6+ (13 ♖f3?? ♚xe4) 13...♚xf6 14 ♖f3 ♖d5 etc. Therefore the more consistent 11 e5 is called for, e.g. 11...♚e4 12 ♖d3 (12 f3 ♚xg3+ 13 hxg3 is an edge for White) 12...f5 13 ♚e2 ♚g5 14 ♙xg5 ♖xg5 15 g3



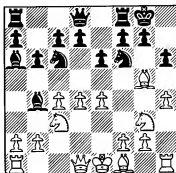
White will soon have a pleasant game after ♚f4 followed by ♙g2.

The game K.Berg-Brynell, Malmö 1988 went 9...cxd5 10 e5 ♚e8 11 ♖g4 ♚h8 12 h4

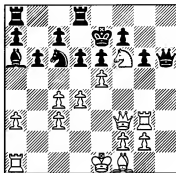
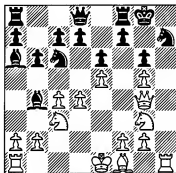
c5 13 ♞h3. White seems to be on his way to a kingside attack, but after 13...♚c6 14 ♙e3 cxd4 15 ♙xd4 ♚c7 16 ♞d1 ♚e6 17 a3 ♙e7 18 ♚f5 ♞c8 19 ♞hd3 g6 20 ♚xe7 ♚xe7 21 ♙e3 attention had switched to the d-file, 21...♞c4 22 ♖xc4 dxc4 23 ♞xd8 ♞xd8 24 ♞xd8+ ♚xd8 25 ♙g5 ♚ec6 26 ♙e2 securing White an advantage in the resulting ending.

7...♚c6 is Black's most popular choice and usually introduces ...c6-e5. Reacting with 8 e5 ♚e8 9 ♖a4 ♙b7 10 ♙d3 seems to force Black to retreat, but in Lautier-Wahls, Dortmund 1989 Black pounced: 10...♚xd4! 11 ♖xb4. Now 11...♙xg2 12 ♙xh7+ ♜xh7 13 ♖xf8 ♙xh1! looks good for Black (rather than 13...♚c2+ 14 ♚d1 ♚xa1 15 ♚ce4), e.g. 14 ♞b1 (14 ♚ce4? ♙xe4 15 ♚xe4 ♚f3+) 14...♙c6 15 ♖x7 ♚f3+ 16 ♙e2 d6 etc. Instead the game continued 11...c5 12 ♖a4 ♙xg2 13 ♙e4 ♙xe4 14 ♚xc4 ♚f3+ 15 ♜f1 ♚xe5 16 f4 ♚g6 17 ♖d1 d5 18 cxd5 exd5, when I prefer Black.

Tricky is 8 ♙g5 h6 9 h4!



From Black's point of view this is not the kind of position to be in without any prior knowledge of the implications of White's offer. Not only has White been given his centre, but now he's taking liberties on the kingside. The obvious move here is to test White with the brave looking 9...hxg5 10 hxg5 g6 (10...♚e8?? 11 ♖h5 leads to mate) 11 e5 (11 gxf6 ♖xf6 12 e5 ♖f4) 11...♚h7 12 ♖g4

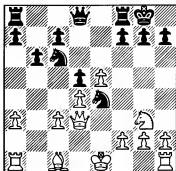


Vaisser-Dautov, Baden-Baden 1995 soon brought White victory after 12...♔g7 13 ♖h5+! gxf5 14 ♖xh5 ♚h8 15 ♖h6+ ♔g8 16 ♔d3 d6 17 ♔xh7+ ♚xh7 18 ♖xh7+ ♔f8 19 g6 ♖e8 20 ♖h4. However, in Hedman-Yemelin, Panormo 2001 Black improved: 12...♔xg5! 13 ♖ge4 ♔g7 14 ♖xg5 ♚h8 15 ♚xh8 ♖xh8 16 ♖f4 ♔f8 17 ♖f6+ ♔g8 18 ♖xh8+ ♔xh8 19 0-0-0 with equality. In fact it is surprising that this strategy had not been discovered earlier, as Black's options retain the tension but in circumstances that appear to favour White. The thematic counter 9...e5?! led to a clear advantage for White after both of the following: 10 a3 ♔e7 11 d5 ♖d4 12 ♖f5 ♖xf5 13 exf5 e4 14 ♔e3 ♔c5 15 g4 ♔xc3 16 fxe3 ♖h7 17 ♖c2 ♚e8 18 0-0-0, Ornstein-Eisterer, Vienna 1986, and 10 d5 ♖a5 11 ♖f3 ♔xc4 12 ♖f5 ♔xf1 13 ♔xf1 ♖c4 14 ♔xh6 ♖d6 15 ♖xd6 ♔xd6 16 ♔g5 ♔e7 17 ♖e2 c6?! 18 d6! ♔xd6 19 ♖g3 ♔e7 20 ♖f5 d5 21 ♔d1 ♚e8 22 exd5 cxd5 23 h5, Plachetka-L.Schneider, Lucerne Olympiad 1982.

Handke-Becker, Germany 1999 went 9...d6 10 a3 ♔xc3+ 11 bxc3 hxg5 (this works out less well in this position, so 11...e5 12 d5 ♖a5 13 ♖f3 ♔xc4 14 ♖f5 deserves a try, even if this does look awkward) 12 hxg5 ♚e8?! (12...g6 13 gxf6 ♖xf6 14 ♖g4 is a lesser evil) 13 gxf6 ♖xf6 14 ♖h5 ♖h6 15 ♚h3! ♔f8 16 ♔g3 g6 17 ♖f6 ♚ed8 18 ♖f3 ♔e7 19 e5

White is having all the fun.

8 ♔d3 is the main move, the d4-pawn being safe in view of 8...♖xd4? 9 ♖a4. 8...d5?! is wrong here as it helps White's cause after 9 cxd5 ♔xd3 10 ♖xd3 exd5 11 e5 ♖e4 12 a3 (12 ♖gx4 dxe4 13 ♖xe4 ♖xd4 14 0-0 ♔xc3 15 bxc3 ♖c6 is equal, White's kingside majority effectively cancelled out by his poor queenside) 12...♔xc3+ 13 bxc3

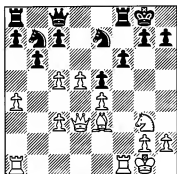


Then 13...♖f3? 14 hxg3? 14 hxg3 h6 runs into 15 ♔xh6! gxh6 16 ♚xh6. Consequently Black has played 13...f5 14 ♖c2 ♖a5 (14...♖g5? 15 ♖b5) 15 h4, addressing the threat of f2-f3 with 15...♖b3 16 ♚b1 ♖xc1 17 ♚xc1 f4, and now 18 ♖f3 hit the f4-pawn with good results in both Portisch-Spassky, Moscow 1967, which went 18...♖e7 19 c4 c6 20 cxd5 (20 ♖xf4?) 20...cxd5 21 ♖xf4 ♖d7 22 g3 ♖b5, when 23 ♖d3 ♖xd3 24 ♖xd3 ♚f3 25 ♔e2 ♚a8 26 ♚h2 would have been a clear

pawn, and Portisch-Shamkovich, Sarajevo 1963, continuing 18...c5 19 ♖xf4 ♜c8 20 ♜e3 cxd4 21 cxd4 ♜xc1+ 22 ♜xc1 ♜f7 23 g3 ♜c7 24 ♜b2 ♜c4 25 0-0 etc.

8...♖a5 9 ♜e2 is about even, while 9 ♖g5 h6 10 h4 is similar to 8 ♖g5, above. After the recommended 9...♖e7 I don't think White should rush in with 10 e5 or 10 ♖xf6, rather 10 ♜e2 is preferable, when 10...d5? drops a pawn to 11 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 12 cxd5 ♖xd3 13 ♜xd3 exd5 14 ♖xd5 and the automatic 10...h6 11 ♖e3 d5 12 e5 ♖e8 13 cxd5 ♖xd3 14 ♜xd3 exd5 15 ♖f5 leaves Black's kingside a little compromised.

8...e5 is the idea behind ...♖c6, although I prefer White after 9 d5. Then 9...♖a5 10 ♜e2 ♖xc3+ 11 bxc3 c6 12 ♖f5 ♖e8 13 f4! ♜c7 14 fxe5 ♜xe5 15 0-0 was the beginning of trouble on the dark squares for Black in Spassky-Hübner, Munich 1979, and 11...♖e8 12 ♖a3 d6 13 0-0 followed in the near future by kingside expansion with f2-f4 and so on might prove rather cramped for Black. This leaves 9...♖xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♖e7, when 11 ♖g5 is my favourite, e.g. 11...♖e8 12 a4 f6 13 ♖e3 ♜c8 14 0-0 ♖d6 15 ♜e2 ♖b7 16 f4! d6 17 fxe5 dxe5 18 e5! ♖xd3 19 ♜xd3

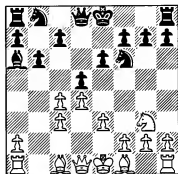


Succeeding in turning the front c-pawn into a positive factor in the ...♖xc3 lines of the Nimzo is usually a good sign for White, and the diagram position is typical. White enjoys extra space across the board and would like to exploit this by opening the

game up – hence the pawn sacrifice. Sadler-Wahls, Germany 1999 continued 19...bxc5 20 a5 a6 21 ♜ab1 ♜f7 22 ♜f2 ♖xa5 23 ♖xc5 ♖b7 24 ♖a3, and White's remaining c-pawn reached c6. Hansen proposes 19...♜d8 20 ♜ad1 bxc5 21 ♜c4 ♖d6 22 ♜xc5 c6 23 e4 cxd5 24 cxd5 ♜d7 as an improvement for Black, but 20 ♜c4! threatens a nasty discovered check with d5-d6 so that 20...♜h8 can be met with c5-c6 as the queen is no longer on the d-file (20 c6? ♖xc6). Black has 20...♖a5 but then dropping back with 21 ♜e2 renews the threat to push to c6, and Black no longer has c5 covered. (21...♖b3? 22 d6!)

**7 bxc3 d5**

The point. Because White has not yet castled, Black is in a good position to exert pressure on the f1-a6 diagonal. Failure to strike now gives White too much territory after 7...0-0 8 e4 d6 9 ♖d3 ♖bd7 10 f4, while postponing the push here until 8...d5 has allowed White to bring his c-pawn into play, 9 e5 ♖fd7 10 cxd5 ♖xf1 11 ♜xf1 exd5 12 ♜g4 being easy for White. Notice White's recapture on f1 with the king – this is a situation in which development and time are more important than the right to castle.

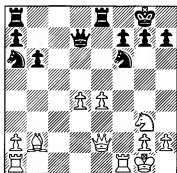


**8 ♖a3**

The most active response, but White has a couple of alternatives. After 8 cxd5 ♖xf1 9 ♜xf1 exd5 10 ♖a3 White has a pull, but with 9...♜xd5! Black benefits enough from the

piece play to hold the balance, e.g. 10 ♖d3 ♘bd7 11 e4 (11 c4 ♖b7 12 e4 e5 is unclear) 11...♗a5 (Gligoric-Portisch, Wijk aan Zee 1975), when Kharitonov suggests 12 ♖e2! ♗c5 13 ♙d1 0-0 14 ♖f1 ♙ac8 15 ♙b2 with chances for both sides.

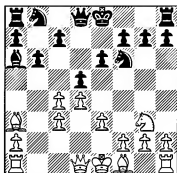
8 ♖f3! continues the diagonal theme. Then 8...0-0 9 cxd5 exd5 (9...♙xf1 10 dxe6) 10 ♙xa6 ♘xa6 11 ♖c2 ♖c8 12 f3 ♙c8 13 0-0 c5 saw White react to the 'pressure' on his centre by expanding anyway with 14 e4 in Donner-Kupper, Leysin 1967, the hanging pawns being well supported and therefore reasonably healthy after the subsequent 14...cxd4 15 cxd4 dxe4 16 fxe4 ♖d7 17 ♙b2



In fact 17...♗c7 18 ♙xf6! gxf6 19 d5 caused sufficient concern to Black that he shut out the bishop with 19...♙c5, although the weaknesses remained. Again Black does better to bring his queen to d5, e.g. 9...♖xd5 10 e4 ♗a5 11 ♙xa6 ♖xa6 12 ♙g5! ♘bd7 13 ♖c2! ♗a3 (13...♖xc2+?! 14 ♖xe2 c5 15 a4! gave White a nagging edge in Knaak-Wahls, Baden-Baden 1992) 14 ♖c1 c5 15 0-0 with an interesting struggle ahead.

Unfortunately for White the logical follow-up to 8 ♖f3 0-0, namely 9 e4, backfires because after 9...dxe4! 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♖xe4 Black has 11...♖d7! with the traditional positional threat of ...♗c6-a5 to hit the c4-pawn, the rook in the corner quite safe in view of White's poor development in the case of 12 ♖xa8? ♗c6 13 ♖xf8+ etc.

Let us return to the position after 8 ♙a3:



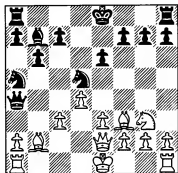
The reasoning behind ♙a3 is obvious (assuming White's intentions are positive) – White is prepared to let the c4-pawn go in return for pinning the enemy king down in the centre. These situations often come down to taste, some players happy applying pressure, others more appreciative of the extra material. Let's see what kind of problems Black can expect to experience after each capture on c4.

#### 8...♙xc4

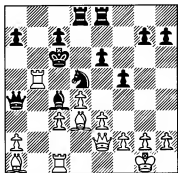
The most popular choice, allowing White to steer the game to an ending if he so wishes. The alternative capture, 8...dxc4, on the other hand, forces White to justify the investment. The obvious response is immediate expansion with 9 e4, e.g. 9...♖d7 10 ♙e2 ♗c6 11 ♖c2 0-0-0 12 0-0 h5 13 ♙fd1 h4 14 ♗f1 ♘h5 15 d5 ♗e5 16 dxe6. We are following Portisch-Fischer, Siegen Olympiad 1970. Thanks to the location of the knight on h5, 16...♖xe6 loses to 17 ♙xd8+ as 17...♗xd8 18 ♙xh5 ♙xh5 runs into 19 ♖d1+. Thus the game went 16...♖e8 17 ♙xd8+ ♖xd8 18 ♙xh5 ♙xh5 19 f4 ♗d3 20 exf7 and White was well on top (although Fischer managed to fight for the draw).

9 ♙e2 is also played and can transpose to the above game after a quick e3-e4. Another game from the 1970s is well worth a look. Szabo-Timman, Hilversum 1973 continued 9...♖d7 10 ♙f3 ♗c6 11 ♗a4 ♙b7 12 ♖xc4

♠a5 13 ♖e2 ♠d5 14 ♙b2 ♗a4



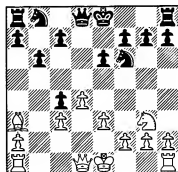
Black has returned the pawn with a view to occupying c4 with a piece in a bid to take over the light squares on the queenside. Of course White has more presence in the centre and on the kingside, but with his next he elects to address proceedings on the queenside anyway: 15 ♙e4 ♠c4 16 ♙d3 ♙a6 (16...♠xb2?? 17 ♙b5+) 17 0-0 0-0-0 18 ♜fc1 ♞he8 19 ♠c4! (another piece heads to challenge for c4) 19...♠b7 20 ♞ab1! ♠f5 21 ♠d2 ♠xd2 22 ♗xd2 ♙c4 23 ♗e2 b5 24 ♙a1 ♗c6 and now came 25 ♞xb5!



I assume White had this positional sacrifice in mind well in advance of its execution. The result is a removal of the bind, after which White gets a turn to flex his muscles (even the dark-squared bishop might see daylight). There followed 25...♙xb5 (25...♗xb5 26 ♙xc4+ ♗xc4?? 27 ♞b1+) 26

♙xb5+ ♗xb5 27 c4 ♗b6 28 cxd5+ ♗xd5 29 ♗f3+ ♗d6 30 d5 exd5? (30...♗e7! 31 ♙d4 ♗a5 32 ♗g3 is unclear) 31 ♙d4 c5? (continuing the faulty defence, although 31...♗a5, for example, sees White begin to collect after 32 ♗f4+ ♗e6 33 ♗e5+ ♗d7 34 ♗xf5+ ♗e6 35 ♗xh7 etc.) 32 ♙xc5+ ♗xc5 33 ♗f4+ ♗c6 34 ♗a4+ and the queen threatened to dominate in the event of 34...♠b6 35 ♙xc5 ♗xc5 36 ♗xa7+.

9 ♙xc4 dxc4



### 10 0-0

Consistent. 10 ♗a4+ ♗d7 11 ♗xc4 takes the game in a different direction altogether, 11...♗c6 12 ♗xc6+ ♠xc6 13 c4 0-0-0 14 ♞c1 ♠b7 15 ♗e2, for instance, being more attractive to White in that Black's future is likely to involve a combination of waiting and defending. This can be avoided by not offering the exchange of queens and opting instead for 11...♠c6, when Yudasin suggests following up with ...♠a5 and ...0-0-0. However, keeping the queens in play probably benefits White more than Black.

### 10...♗d7

Preparing to come to the aid of the e4-pawn.

### 11 ♞b1

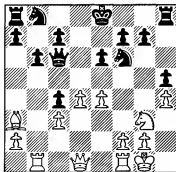
Cutting across the opposition's plans is a key part of the game, and ruling out ...♗b5 looks considerably more promising for White than the automatic 11 e4 ♗b5 12 ♞b1 ♗a6 13 ♙b4, when Dearing-Pritchett, Scottish

Championship 1996 favoured Black after 13...♖bd7! 14 a4 c5 15 ♖a3 0-0 16 f4 ♖ad8 17 f5 e5, White having next to no compensation for the pawn. With ♖b1, however, White forces his opponent to place his queen on a more vulnerable square than a6, setting the stage for a further sacrifice aimed at breaking open the game under favourable circumstances.

**11...h5 12 h4 ♖c6**

If Black's side of what follows is not to your liking, then Yudasin's 12...♖c6 and ...0-0-0 is worth a try.

**13 e4!**



13 ♖e2 has been proposed by Psakhis, but Lautier's treatment has more punch.

**13...♖bd7**

In the event of 13...♖xe4? 14 d5! Psakhis gives 14...♖xd5 15 ♖a4+ c6 16 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 17 ♖xb6! with serious trouble for Black's king, while 15...♖c6? 16 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 17 ♖fe1 ♖d5 18 ♖bd1 b5 19 ♖a6 and 15...♖d7? 16 ♖fd1 ♖xc3 17 ♖b4 are even worse for the defender. Also good for White is 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♖e1 ♖d5 16 ♖e5 followed by d4-d5 etc.

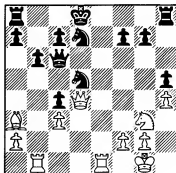
**14 d5!**

The point, and a new move at the time of the game.

**14...♖b7?!**

It is interesting how many times at this level of competition that a new, aggressive idea that involves the sacrifice of a pawn or

two is met with caution by the opposition. Here Black elects to turn down the offer, but Lautier believes 14...exd5 to be Black's best. Then a feasible line is 15 exd5 ♖xd5 16 ♖e1+ ♖d8 17 ♖a4 (Velickovic suggests 17 ♖e7) 17...♖e8 18 ♖ed1 ♖e6 19 ♖b2!, intending to double on the d-file or to come to e2. After 15...♖xd5 Yudasin recommends 16 ♖f5!?, directed against ...0-0-0 due to the fork on e7 after ♖xd5. Instead there is 16 ♖e1+ ♖d8 17 ♖d4



Black is two pawns up, but the good news ends there, with White's compensation quite obvious. Perhaps Black's chances are preferable after 14...exd5 but most players would nevertheless feel more comfortable on White's side of the board;

**15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♖a4**

Aggressive and keeping the game open, whereas the hasty 16 e5?! permits Black to establish a blockade of sorts with the move 16...♖d5.

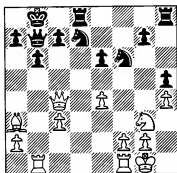
**16...0-0-0**

It is imperative that Black's king is provided with some kind of safety. 16...♖xc4? 17 ♖xc4 ♖ec5 (17...♖xg3 18 ♖xe6+ ♖d8 19 ♖bd1 c5 20 ♖fe1!) 18 ♖xc5 ♖c6 19 ♖e4 sees White able to maintain the momentum in his position.

**17 ♖xc4 ♖b8**

With the capture of the c4-pawn the material score is level, but White's more active forces guarantee an advantage.



**18 ♚fd1**

Activity is the key here, and Black would be given an opportunity to better mobilise after 18 ♚xc6?! ♚he8 19 ♚f7 ♚xe4, e.g. 20 ♚xe4 ♚xc4 21 ♚xh5 ♚f6 etc. Psakhis, meanwhile, proposed 18 f3?, bolstering the centre and enough for a healthy lead.

**18...♚e5**

Not satisfied (justifiably) with 18...♚he8 19 f3, Black endeavours to rock the boat.

**19 ♚b5!?**

Putting the ball back in Black's half of the court. However, 19 ♚xd8+ ♚xd8 20 ♚xe6 ♚e8 21 ♚b3 (21 ♚f5? ♚a6 22 ♚b3 ♚c4 23 ♚xh5? ♚c5) 21...♚xe4 22 ♚a4 ♚f6 has been evaluated as equal, but White can exploit the overloaded knight with 23 ♚xh5.

**19...♚c6**

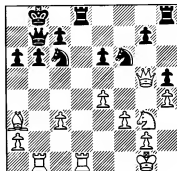
19...♚f7 20 f3 is, again, a clear lead for White, while 19...♚eg4? 20 f3 ♚c3? 21 ♚xd8+ ♚xd8 22 ♚e2 would be careless.

**20 f3**

With the e4-pawn protected White is ready to offer the knight a more appropriate role after ♚f1-c3.

**20...a6?!**

Under pressure, Black is tempted into breaking the rule regarding unnecessary pawn moves in front of the king, chasing the queen from b5 creating potential weaknesses on both a6 and b6. 20...♚a8 21 ♚f1 is safer, and Yudasin's 20...c5 might be another lesser evil.

**21 ♚g5**

Switching flanks. Notice how Black's defensive problems are not helped by the odd fianchetto posting of his queen.

**21...♚dg8**

21...♚hg8 fails to 22 ♚xd8+ ♚xd8 23 ♚xh5 ♚f7 24 ♚f4!

**22 ♚f1**

With Black pegged back White has time to redeploy his knight.

**22...♚d8 23 ♚e3 ♚c6 24 c4!**

Monitoring d5 in order to make e4-c5 a more potent threat, and introducing the possibility of c4-c5 to soften up Black's recently (voluntarily) compromised queenside.

**24...♚f7 25 ♚g6**

25 ♚f4?! makes little sense in view of 25...c5 26 ♚f5 g6 27 ♚h3 g5 with counterplay.

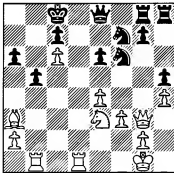
**25...♚e8**

The not so passive 25...♚e5 still leaves Black struggling after 26 ♚g3, e.g. 26...♚f7 (26...♚ed7 and 26...♚f7 27 c5 are excellent for White, while 26...♚xc4?? loses to 27 ♚dc1) 27 c5 b5 28 ♚b2 ♚f7 29 ♚c2! e5 30 ♚b4 ♚xc5+ 31 ♚h1.

**26 ♚g3 ♚c8**

Black's king is clearly a worry. 26...♚b7 27 c5 b5 (27...♚a4 28 cxb6 cxb6 29 ♚c5) 28 c6+! opens an important file with decisive effect, e.g. 28...♚xc6 29 ♚bc1 ♚b6 30 ♚c5 ♚a5 (30...♚c6 31 ♚d4) 31 e5 ♚d5 (31...♚e8 32 ♚g6) 32 ♚xd5 exd5 33 e6 ♚d8 34 e7 ♚e6 (34...♚c6 35 ♚xd5 ♚xa2 36 ♚d7) 35

♖e5 ♗xc5 36 ♗xd5+. Attempting a blockade with 26...♗c6 fails to 27 c5 b5 28 ♗c4! with ♗a5 to follow, after which White will clear the way for the loosening a2-a4.  
**27 c5 b5 28 c6**



### 28...♗h6

'Simplifying' with 28...♗xc6 29 ♖bc1 ♗b6 30 ♗xc7+ (30 ♗c5 ♗b7) 30...♗xc7 31 ♖c1 ♗xc1+ 32 ♗c1 ♗b7 33 ♗b2 ♗h6 34 ♗f4 has been evaluated as better for White, but Black's problems might be more serious than they first appear, e.g. 34...g5 35 hxg5 ♗xg5 36 ♗f2 ♗e8 37 a4!, and White's pieces are better placed to attack on the queenside than Black's are to defend there. White had to consider 28...g5!?, when 29 c5 (Yudasin) 29...gxh4 30 ♗f4 ♗d5 31 ♗xd5 exd5 32 ♗f5+ ♗b8 33 e6 ♗d8 34 ♗xd5 sees White closing in.

### 29 ♖bc1

Next on the agenda is ♗c1-a5.

### 29...♗d8

This time 29...g5 30 ♗e1 ♗b8 31 ♖c5 ♗c8 (31...gxh4 32 ♗a5) 32 ♗xb5+! axb5 33 ♗a5 ♗d6 34 ♗c5 is the way in.

### 30 ♖c5

30 ♗e1! (Psakhis) looks good as Black's defence along his third rank with 30...♗xc6 31 ♖d3 ♗h7 (31...e5 32 ♗f5) 32 ♖dc3 e5 33 ♗f5 ♗g6 invites 34 ♗xc6! thanks to the fork on e7. Thus after 31...♗b8 32 ♗d6 c6 33 ♗a5 White's queen reaches the target zone.

### 30...e5

30...♗xc6 31 ♖dc1, or 30...♗f7 31 ♗e1 ♗b8 32 ♗a5.

### 31 ♗f5 1-0

A successful demonstration of White's strategy.

### Game 2

### Gutov-Yemelin

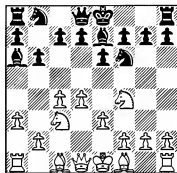
Moscow 1999

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♗b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♗e2 ♗a6 6 a3

Question time. Should Black keep the bishop in play or eliminate a knight? There are pros and cons, for both sides, for both arguments but, typically, Nimzo devotees are content to make the trade on c3 even if White is not forced into b2xc3, the traditional 'knights versus bishops' struggle being a key theme of the opening.

### 6...♗xc3+

Let us investigate the implications of the main alternative, 6...♗e7!?, which, in fact, invests a tempo to highlight White's awkward development. The knight came to e2 primarily to support its partner but now serves only to lock the bishop on f1. Here the most constructive response is 7 ♗f4



From this square (rather than g3) the knight is well placed to monitor the kingside and (importantly) the d5-square, around which the next phase of the game revolves after 7...d5 (7...0-0 8 b4 ♗b7 9 ♗e2 a5 10 b5

d6 11 ♖f3 ♜c8 12 0-0 ♝bd7 13 ♠b2 leaves Black cramped). Thus after 7...d5 Black both claims a share of the centre and prepares to contest the f1-a6 diagonal. Not surprisingly the obvious capture on d5 is the popular reply, but 8 b3 transposes to Akopian-Burnett, Stratton Mountain USA 2003, which is worth a look: 8...0-0 9 ♠b2 ♠d6 10 ♜f3 ♠xf4 11 ♜xf4 and now 11...♞c6 invited 12 cxd5 ♠xf1 13 dxc6 ♠xg2 14 ♜g1 when Black resisted the urge to keep going with 14...♠xc6 as 15 d5 would unleash a menacing bishop on the other long diagonal. Instead Black played 14...♠d5 with a sharp battle in prospect. White's light squares aren't up to much, but his command of the dark squares seems more significant, given the location of Black's king, and White's game does look easier to handle. In fact after castling long White's kingside attack took quite a natural course, and he eventually broke through on the a1-h8 diagonal.

This is interesting but the initial tactics were instigated by Black, and 8 cxd5 ♠xf1 can anyway lead to entertaining scenarios. Burnett was involved in another game in which White essayed a rarely played alternative to the norm, Ibragimov-Burnett, Philadelphia 2002 seeing White spare the enemy bishop in return for a collection of pawns and some inconvenience for Black after 9 dxe6! ♠a6 10 exf7+ ♠xf7 11 ♜b3+ ♠e8 12 ♝e6 ♜d7 13 ♝xg7+ ♠d8 14 ♝e6+ etc.

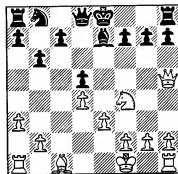
White does have four pawns for the piece and Black's king is stranded in the centre (White's will have to come to the queenside), but White is rather vulnerable on the light squares, and 'unclear' is a typically ambiguous but reasonable evaluation.

Instead 9 ♠xf1 allows White to turn his attentions to the d5-pawn. In the event of 9...exd5 10 g4! Black has an equally subtle method of preventing the hit on the f6-knight in 10...g5. Then 11 ♝h5! ♝xh5 12 gxh5 c6 13 ♜f3 ♝a6 14 e4 ♝c7 is quite messy. 10...c6 looks solid but I think White is

given too much freedom to generate a pull on the kingside after either 11 g5 ♝fd7 12 h4, or 11...♝e4 12 ♝xe4 dxe4 13 h4 etc. Note the potential vulnerability of the e4-pawn here.

10...h6 appears futile as 11 ♜f3 c6 12 h4 fails to hold White at bay, but 10...0-0! can be tricky. I recommend 11 g5 ♝e4 12 ♝xe4! dxe4 13 h4 rather than 12 ♝xd5 ♠xg5 13 ♜c2 ♝f6, when Wells gives 14 ♝xc7 ♜c8 15 ♜c3 ♜b7 16 ♜g1 ♠xf4 17 exf4 ♜c8 18 ♜g3 ♝h5, while 14 h4 ♠h6 15 ♝xf6+ ♜xf6 16 ♜e4! ♠xf4 17 ♜xa8 ♝c6 18 ♜b7 ♠g3! 19 f4 ♜e6! 20 ♜g1 ♜h3+ 21 ♠e2 ♜h2+ 22 ♠d3 ♜xg1 23 ♜xc6 ♜d1+ 24 ♠c4 ♜c2+ 25 ♠b5 a6+ was the entertaining Wells-Pigott, Morecambe 1981.

The trendy line is 9...♝xd5! 10 ♝cd5 (I don't trust 10 e4, when 10...♝xc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 ♠e3 c5 exploits White's poor king position and, with two sets of minor pieces having already left the board, White can't have enough to launch an attack, as was demonstrated after 13 ♜g4 ♝d7 14 e5 ♜c7 15 h4 cxd4 16 cxd4 ♜fe8 in Logunov-Belozherov, Tomsk 2002) 10...exd5 11 ♜h5



Without looking too closely at the diagram position we can be forgiven for assuming that after 11...c6 approximate equality arises. However, as well as hitting d5, the school-boy-like ♜h5 also places the queen on the short but oft significant h5-e8 diagonal which, in this case, introduces the quite real

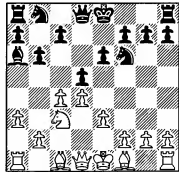
threat of ♖e6, illustrating another reason why f4 is preferred to g3 for the knight in this particular line. Therefore after 11...c6 12 ♖e6 g6 13 ♖e5 ♖f6 (13...f6? 14 ♖g3 ♖d6 15 ♖xd8 ♖xg3 16 ♖xc6 simply lost a pawn for nothing in Ravi-Ahmed, Mumbai 2003) 14 ♖xd8+ (not 14 ♖c7+? ♖d7 15 ♖f4 g5) 14...♖xe5 White has a choice of pawns. 15 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 16 dxe5 appears to help Black by improving his king, with decent compensation for the pawn after both 16...♖d7 17 f4 ♖c5 18 b4 ♖e4 19 ♖b2 ♖e6 20 ♖e2 h5 21 ♖hc1 c5, as in Timman-Hübner, Montreal 1979, and 16...♖e6 17 f4 ♖d7 18 ♖e2 ♖c5 19 ♖d2 ♖e4 20 ♖ac1 c5 21 ♖hd1 a5 22 ♖e1 b5, Neiman-Kesmaecker, France 1991. Black's wall of pawns on the queenside looked impressive in these examples, suggesting that White does better to address this immediately with 15 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 16 dxe5 ♖xe5 which, although resulting in a level score in terms of pawns, gives White the superior structure and a good minor piece after 17 ♖d2. In the higher echelons of international practice White has had difficulty converting his slight advantage but, in the real world, nor is Black's defensive task – a long and arduous one if White continues to nibble away – a comforting prospect.

With this in mind Black should probably opt for 11...♖g5, e.g. 12 ♖e6 g6 13 ♖xg5 ♖xe6 14 ♖e5 ♖d7 15 ♖g7+ ♖c8 16 ♖d2 ♖c6 17 ♖c1 ♖b7 18 ♖e2 ♖e7 19 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 and a draw was agreed in Corral Blanco-Vallejo Pons, Barcelona 2000, or 12 e4 ♖xf4 13 ♖xf4 ♖c6 14 ♖c1 (14 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 15 exd5 ♖e7 16 ♖xc7 ♖xd5 17 ♖g3 ♖c8 gave Black typical 'Arkell' compensation in Varelle-Arkell, Paris 1994, the knight dominating the bishop) 14...♖e7 15 ♖xc7 ♖d7 16 exd5 0-0! 17 d6 ♖f5 and White could make nothing of the two pawn lead in S.Saeed-Timman, Taxco Interzonal 1985. The game came to a tidy end: 18 ♖f3 ♖ac8 19 ♖c6 ♖fd8 20 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 21 ♖d1 (21 ♖e2 ♖xd4+ 22 ♖e3 ♖b5 23 ♖hd1 h5 also

heads for the draw) 21...♖xd6 22 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 23 ♖e2 ♖c2+ 24 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 25 ♖xd2 ♖xd4+ with a draw.

Returning to 6...♖xc3+, the nature of the struggle tends to be quite different from 6...♖e7 in that Black seeks to strike very quickly in the centre with an assault on e4.

### 7 ♖xc3 d5



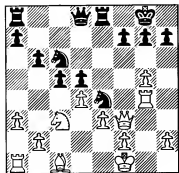
This thrust is a major idea behind ...♖a6. White has a number of plans available, depending on factors such as how he feels about defending his queenside, attacking on the kingside, fixed or fluid pawns, the bishop pair, retaining the tension and so on.

8 b4 doesn't mess about. Then 8...dxc4 9 ♖f3 c6 10 b5 ♖b7 11 ♖xc4 looks a shade preferable for White in view of the bishop pair, so Black's best is to head for the ending with 8...♖xc4 9 ♖xc4 dxc4 10 ♖e2 ♖d7 11 ♖xc4 ♖c6 12 ♖xc6+ ♖xc6, when a certain level of skill is required of White if an advantage is to be earned. Kaspi-Rechlis, Israel 1999 continued 13 ♖b2 0-0-0 14 ♖c1 ♖b7 15 ♖e2 a5 16 b5 ♖a7 17 a4 c6 18 bxc6+ ♖xc6 and now 19 f3! looked promising, while 19 0-0 ♖c8 20 ♖c3 ♖b4 21 ♖b5 would have taken White's lead further, e.g. 21...♖hd8 22 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23 ♖c1+ ♖b8 24 ♖a3 etc.

8 cxd5?! completely lacks the punch we saw in the ...♖e7 line because the exchange on c3 has rid White of a knight with which to exert pressure on Black. After 8...♖xf1 9

♖xf1 exd5 10 b4 0-0 11 ♖b3 ♕c6 12 a4 ♗d7 13 ♙a3 ♜fe8 14 h3 ♞e6 15 ♞c1 ♞ae8 16 ♚g1 White would have been doing well in Rajkovic-Martin, Gosa-Wood Green 1991 were his king and h1-rook the other way around. However, Black was able to jump to action with 16...♕xd4! 17 exd4 ♞e1+ 18 ♚h2 ♕g4+! 19 hxg4 ♗d6+ 20 ♚h3 ♖h6+ 21 ♚g3 and Black could have taken a draw.

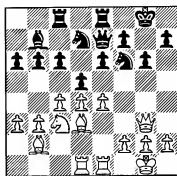
Meanwhile, in Suran-Novotny, Czech Team Championship 1995, White mixed systems, following 10 ♖f3 0-0 with the sometimes appropriate (but not here) 11 g4, when 11...♞c8 12 g5 ♕e4 13 ♞g1 c5 14 ♞g4 ♕c6! was a good example of action on the flank being effectively countered in the centre.



In fact 15 ♕xe4 dxe4 16 ♞xe4 cxd4 17 ♙d2 ♗d7 18 ♞c1 dxe3 19 ♞xe8+ ♞xe8 20 ♙xe3 ♕e5 21 ♙d1 ♖b5+ 22 ♖e2 ♖c6 earned Black a practically decisive advantage on the light squares.

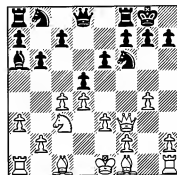
My favourite is 8 ♖f3! which takes the pressure off c4 through the pin on the long diagonal. Then 8...c6 renews the threat. Valin-Eliet, Bogny sur Meuse 2003 is a good advert for 8 ♖f3. The game continued 9 b3 0-0 10 ♙b2 (10 g4 – see Reshevsky-Mashian, below) 10...♖c7 11 ♞d1 ♞e8 12 ♙c2 ♕bd7 13 0-0 ♙b7 14 ♖g3! and a normal position arose with an important difference being the location of White's queen outside the shield of pawns. Combined with the ambitious

bishop on b2, this posting of the queen is enough to dissuade Black from the desirable ...c6-c5 pawn break. 14...♞ac8 15 ♞f1 a6 16 ♙d3 g6 17 e4



With his forces optimally placed White finally seeks to open the game for the bishop pair, most notably to remind Black of his unfortunate predicament on the dark squares. 17...dxe4 18 bxc4 e5 19 dxe5 ♕xe5 20 ♙e2 b5 (Black will be pushed off the board after 20...c5 21 f4 ♕ed7 22 ♙f3 and ♕d5 etc.) 21 h3 ♖c5 22 ♖h4 ♞e6 23 ♕b1! ♞ce8 24 ♕d2 ♕fd7 25 ♕b3 ♖e7 26 ♖xe7 ♞6xe7 27 ♕a5 ♙c8 28 cxb5 cxb5 29 f4 ♕c4 30 ♙xc4 bxc4 31 ♕xc4 ♕f8 32 ♕d6 1-0.

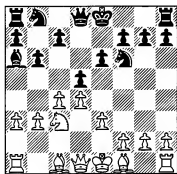
To add a bit of extra spice to the ingredients White can follow up 8...0-0 with 9 g4



This bayonet attack has had a number of followers at international level over the years and the thrust seems to work well with the

queen on f3. In reply to the natural 9...c6 I believe White should follow the rule that the threat is stronger than its execution, holding back the g-pawn and taking time to bolster the c4-pawn and continue development with 10 b3 rather than jump straight in with 10 g5, e.g. 10...♖fd7 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 e4?! (12 ♙xa6) 12...♙xf1 13 ♗xf1 ♖c6 14 ♙e3 e5! Palermo-Sanguineti, Buenos Aires 1959, or 10...♖e8 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 e4 ♙xf1 13 ♗xf1 ♖c6 14 ♙e3 dxe4 15 ♗xe4 ♖e7 16 ♙d1 ♖c7 17 h4 ♖cd5 18 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 19 ♙h3 ♗d7 20 ♗g2 ♙ac8 21 ♙f3 ♗b5 22 ♙c1 ♗a4 23 ♙c1 ♗c2, Paetz-Bischoff, German Team Championship 1991. In Reshevsky-Mashian, Tel Aviv 1964 the hit on the f6-knight was more troublesome after (10 b3) 10...♗c7 11 ♙b2 dxc4 12 bxc4 ♖bd7 13 g5 ♖e8, when 14 ♙c1 e5 15 d5 c5 16 ♖e4 ♖d6 17 ♙d3 ♖xe4 18 ♗xe4 g6 19 h4 ♙ae8 20 h5 was becoming difficult for Black. Notice how White's insisting on maintaining a pawn on c4 – and therefore not having to worry about the f1-a6 diagonal – keeps Black contained and subsequently assists the kingside offensive.

### 8 b3



Simple, sensible play, and the kind of move we would anyway decide on without necessarily having to appreciate much of what can happen next. Ultimately White aims to demonstrate an advantage by operating on the dark squares.

### 8...♖c6

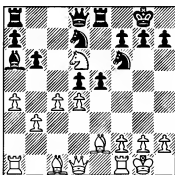
Still with e4 in his sights, Black prepares to send the knight to a5.

8...c5 9 dxc5 bxc5 runs the risk of giving White something to aim at on c5 – 10 ♙e2 0-0 11 0-0 ♖bd7 (11...♖c6 12 ♖a4 ♗c7 13 cxd5 ♙xe2 14 ♗xe2 exd5 15 ♗b5) 12 a4 ♙b7 13 ♙a3 ♗b6 14 ♙b1 ♖e5 15 cxd5 ♖xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 17 ♗c2 ♙fc8 18 e4, Ulko-Sorokin, St Petersburg 2000 is a good example.

8...0-0 tends to lead to the main game after ...♖c6. Similarly, 9 ♙e2 ♖c6 10 a4, for example, steers us back to the game, but 9...♖bd7 is slightly different, the plan being to support the centre – the ...c7-c5 push in particular. Then 10 ♙b2 fails to give the bishop its most active role, and 10...dxc4 11 bxc4 c5 12 0-0 cxd4 13 exd4 ♙c8 gave Black time to hit c4 in Lisitsin-Bondarevsky, USSR Championships 1948. In fact after 14 ♖b5 ♙xb5 15 cxb5 ♖d5 16 ♗d2 ♖7f6 17 ♙f3 ♗c7 chances were even, with White's bishops having nowhere to go. There is no reason to commit the bishop so early, which is why 10 0-0 is the move. In reply to the thematic 10...c5 the advance of the a-pawn again fits in well: 11 a4. For example after 11...dxc4 12 bxc4 cxd4 13 exd4 ♙c8?! the extra support of b5 allows 14 ♖b5 with a clear advantage. This time White recaptures on b5 with the a-pawn, and ♙a3 is coming. Meanwhile, Black is also quite passive. An improvement here is 13...e5, although Black is still struggling, e.g. 14 ♙a3 (14 d5 ♖c5 15 a5) 14...♙e8 15 d5 or 14...exd4 15 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 16 ♖b5.

Avrukh-Bunzmann, Biel 1999 went 11...♙e8?!, Black anticipating the arrival of the enemy bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal. Avrukh suggests 11...♙b7 as a lesser evil, when 12 ♙a3 ♙e8 13 ♖b5 ♗b8! 14 ♙c1 a6 15 ♖c3 should keep White's advantage to a minimum. Instead the presence of the rook on e8 gave White's knight an opportunity to take a leading role: (11...♙c8) 12 ♖b5! cxd4 (the multiple stand-off after 12...♙xb5 13

axb5 e5 14 ♖b2 is sure to favour the bishop pair) 13 exd4 (13 ♖d6? dxe3 14 ♖xe8 exf2+ 15 ♙xf2 ♗xc8 is too greedy, and fine for Black) 13...e5 14 ♖d6!



Black seems to have missed 14...♙e6 15 ♖xf7! ♗xf7 16 cxd5, hitting a6 and e6. Nor does 14...♗e7 help in view of 15 ♙g5! exd4 16 ♙f3! h6 17 ♙h4 g5 18 ♙g3 ♖e5 19 ♖f5 and Black's kingside comes under fire – Avrukh. Thus Black had to play 14...♗f8, when the game continued 15 ♙a3 exd4 16 ♗xd4 ♖c5 (sacrificing a pawn rather than suffering after 16...dxc4 17 b4! followed by b4-b5 etc.) 17 ♙xc5 bxc5 18 ♗xc5 ♗e7 19 ♙f3! ♙ac8 (19...♗fd8 20 ♖e4!) 20 ♗a3 ♙cd8 21 ♖b5 ♗xa3 22 ♙xa3 dxc4 23 bxc4 and White's advantage was nearing decisive proportions. Avrukh gives the cheeky 15...dxc4 16 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 17 ♖xc4 ♙e8 18 ♖d6 ♗f8 (18...♙e6 19 d5) 19 ♖b7! ♗c7 20 ♙xf8 ♗xf8 21 dxe5 ♖xe5 22 ♖d6 ♙d8 23 ♖b5.

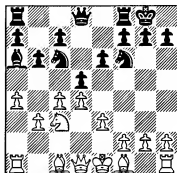
I like 9 a4, with a direct transposition after 9...♖c6 10 ♙e2 and so on. Again 9...c5 should work out well for White, 10 ♙a3 dxc4 11 bxc4 ♖c6 12 ♖b5 ♗b8 13 dxc5 ♙d8 14 ♗b1 bxc5 15 ♙e2 ♗b6 16 0-0 ♙b7 17 ♙a2! being enough for an edge in Aleksandrov-Vladimirov, Istanbul 2000.

#### 9 a4

This certainly is a useful move. 9 ♙e2 is also played, when Mikhhalchishin's experiment to do without castling has been assessed as unclear after 9...dxc4 10 bxc4 ♗d7

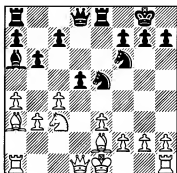
11 a4 ♖a5 12 ♖b5 c6 13 ♖a3 ♙c8, but 14 ♙d2 looks good for White.

#### 9...0-0



#### 10 ♙e2

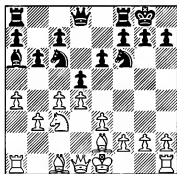
10 ♙a3?! is natural but premature, as was demonstrated in Lautier-Akopian, Enghien les Bains 2001, when driving the rook to the e-file with White's king still there gave Black the additional and attractive option of 10...♙e8 11 ♙e2 e5! 12 dxe5 ♖xe5!



Now White's best is 13 cxd5! ♙xc2 14 ♖xc2! ♖xd5 15 0-0 c5 with a balanced position. However, the game soon became rather unpleasant for White: 13 ♖xd5?! ♖xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♗h4! 15 ♗d4!? (15 ♗d2 ♙ad8 16 ♗c2 ♙b7 17 0-0 ♗g5 18 g3 ♖f3+ 19 ♙xf3 ♙xf3 leaves Black with an enormous bishop) 15...♗xd4 16 exd4 ♖xc4 17 bxc4 ♙xc4 18 0-0 ♙xc2 etc. Earlier, 14 cxd5 was seen in Petursson-Seul, Clichy 1991, when White

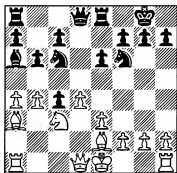
also met with trouble – 14...♙xe2 15 ♗xe2 (15 ♗xe2 ♗xd5) 15...♗g5! 16 ♖f1 ♗ad8 17 ♗d2! ♖g4 18 ♗d1 ♗f5 19 e4 ♗xe4 20 f3 and now 20...♗e5! would have been decisive.

Black has a number of choices after 10 ♖e2.



#### 10...♖a5

Concentrating on c4 without actually making a capture there. In the event of the more direct 10...dxc4 Black needs to be ready for 11 ♖a3 ♗e8 12 b4!



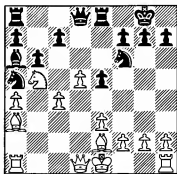
White intends to take on c4 with a piece in order to keep the c-file open and to give the light-squared bishop more scope, while Black is also denied a target on c4. However, despite White's possession of the bishop pair we can see from the diagram position that being pushed back to b7 is hardly an inconvenience for Black, who was doing fine after 12...♖e7 13 b5 ♖b7 14 0-0 ♖ed5 15 ♗c2

♖xc3 16 ♗xc3 ♖e4 17 ♗c2 (17 ♗xc4? ♖d2) 17...♗g5! 18 f4 ♗g6 19 ♖xc4 ♗ac8 20 ♗ac1 c5 in Schouten-Timman, Lecuwarden 1975.

Everything has a price, and with 12 bxc4 the new c4-pawn at least maintains White's territorial advantage. The point of throwing in ♖a3 is seen after the consistent 12...♖a5 13 ♖b5, when the knight does not have to retreat in the event of 13...c6 because d6 is available. Then 14 ♖d6 ♗e7 15 0-0 ♗d7 16 c5 ♖xe2 17 ♗xc2 (Wells) gives White a pull, while 15...c5 16 ♖b5 is unclear. Hansen cites 16 e4 ♗xd6 17 e5 ♗d8 18 exf6 ♗d7 as critical, but this looks excellent for Black as White will be too busy watching his queen-side (and centre) fall into enemy hands to make anything of the situation on the king-side.

Of course Black does not have to invite the knight into d6. Instead 13...♖b7 14 0-0 ♖e4 15 ♖b4 a6 16 ♖a3 (16 ♖c3 ♖c6) 16...c5! 17 ♖xa5 bxa5 saw Black make up for the two a-pawns with superior minor pieces and White's loss of control on the dark squares in Zaja-Hulak, Zagreb 2000. Perhaps White can improve with 15 f3 ♖d6 16 ♖d6 cxd6 17 ♖b4 ♖c6 18 ♖c3, retaining the bishop pair, decent centre and space (note that a4-a5 is in the air here, softening up Black's pawn duo).

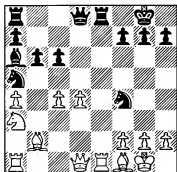
Black can also try 12...e5 13 d5 ♖a5, although White stands better after 14 ♖b5





For example 14...♙xb5 15 axb5 ♖b7 16 ♙b4 ♖d7 17 ♙a3 ♖bc5 18 ♙a1 (Avrukh-Barsov, Antwerp 1999) 18...♙b8 19 0-0 ♙b7 20 ♙g4 sees the bishops assume control over the knights, while 14...♙d7 15 0-0 c6 16 dxc6 ♙xc6 17 ♙c2 ♖b7 (17...♙xb5 18 axb5 ♙e6 19 ♙b4 ♖b7 20 ♙a6 ♙ec8 21 ♙fa1) 18 ♙ac1 ♙ec8 19 ♙b2 ♙c6 20 ♙fd1 ♖c5 21 a5! ♖e8 (21...bxa5? 22 ♙d6) 22 ♙d5 is nice and aggressive. Unlike some lines of the Nimzo in which White's d-pawn has been lured to d5 in order for Black to win the c5-square for a knight, in a number of these examples Black tends to be under pressure on the dark squares, his grip on c5 being far from solid.

10...♙e8 prepared to push the e-pawn in Shabalov-Burnett, Saint Paul 2000, when 11 0-0 dxc4 12 bxc4 ♖a5 13 ♖b5 c6 14 ♖a3 e5 15 ♙b2 exd4 16 exd4 ♖d5 was a key part of the plan, pushing White back after 17 ♙c1 ♖f4 18 ♙f1

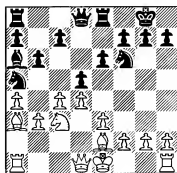


White's pawns give him more space but they also require attention, while White's knight is poorly placed (Black's 'active' knight, though, has no other role than to hit c4). From a theoretical point of view the situation is approximately equal, but Black can have a long-term practical problem holding on to the dark squares in a number of these lines – indeed in the Nimzo. Anyway, in the game Black sought to prolong his brief period of activity with a queen sortie, but was soon sent back to base: 18...♙g5 19 ♙f3

♖e6 20 ♙e5 ♙f6 21 ♙e3! ♖c7 22 d5!? ♙d8 23 ♙d1 cxd5 24 ♙xe8+ ♖xe8 (24...♙xe8? 25 ♙g3 ♖c6 26 cxd5) 25 ♙xd5 ♙c7 26 ♙e5 ♙c6 27 ♖b5 and White was well on top.

10...♖b4 11 ♙a3 c5 is an attempt to close out the bishop but does not prevent White from chipping away at the dark squares, e.g. 12 0-0 ♙b7 13 cxd5 exd5 14 a5!? ♙e7 15 axb6 axb6 16 ♖a4 ♙d6 17 ♙c1 ♙fb8 18 dxc5 bxc5, Gordon-Cioara, Isle of Man 2002, when White could have capped his good play with 19 ♖xc5! ♙xa3 20 ♖xb7, winning a clear pawn in view Black's back rank.

### 11 ♙a3 ♙e8



### 12 ♙b1!?

An interesting alternative to the automatic 12 0-0, when 12...♙c8 13 ♖b5 ♖c4 should be preferred to 12...dxc4? 13 b4 ♖b3 14 ♙b1, which spells trouble for Black in view of the threat to take on b3. Of course the text introduces this possibility immediately.

### 12...♙c8

Not 12...dxc4 13 b4 ♖b3 14 ♙xb3.

### 13 0-0 c5

This is the strike upon which Black has been basing his counterplay.

### 14 dxc5

Time to use the 'extra' dark-squared bishop. It is not unusual for White to see his c-pawn attacked in these lines, but how will Black cope with a potential liability on c5? Note that in making the decision to create

this 'weakness' on e5 White relinquishes the centre to some extent.

#### 14...bxc5 15 ♖b5

The (successful) posting of the knight on b5 effectively closes out both Black's minor pieces on the queenside.

#### 15...♖e4

Threatening ...♗xb5 and ...♖c3.

#### 16 ♖c2

A dual-purpose move, defending c3 (and getting ready for ♖c3 should Black take time for ...a7-a6) and clearing the path for the king's rook to come to d1 to pressure the d5-pawn.

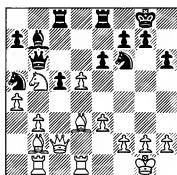
#### 16...♗b6 17 ♖fd1 ♗b7 18 ♗d3 ♖f6 19 ♗b2

Switching attention to the kingside – once again White's influence on the dark squares coming into play.

#### 19...h6 20 ♗c3!?

20 ♗xf6 is tempting, damaging Black's kingside structure, but this is not so easy to exploit and, in the meantime, Black has ...♖c6-b4. After 20...gxf6 21 cxd5 ♗xd5 White cannot play 22 e4? due to 22...♗xb3! 23 ♗xb3 ♖xb3 24 ♗xb3 a6 etc. The text threatens ♗xa5 followed by ♖d6.

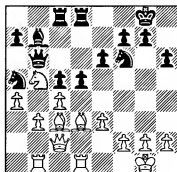
I like 20 cxd5:



After 20...♖xd5 White can relocate the knight to the thematic outpost on e4 with 21 ♖a3, when 21...♗xb3?? loses to 22 ♗h7+ followed by ♗xg7+ and ♗xb3. 20...♗xd5 21 ♗c3 also favours White, who this time actu-

ally wants Black to try 21...♗xb3? thanks to 22 ♗d2!, or 21...♖xb3? 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 e4. Finally there is 20...exd5 21 ♗xf6, when 21...♗xf6 22 ♖xa7 is a free pawn, and 21...gxf6 leaves Black with a collection made up of isolated, doubled and hanging pawns!

#### 20...♗ed8



#### 21 ♗d2?

Chess is a funny game. Apart from the fork threat, ♗c3 introduced two possibilities involving lining up the queen and bishop. White's latest is consistent but incorrect, and he should have opted for the attack on the other knight with 21 ♗b2, e.g. 21...a6 (21...dxc4 22 bxc4 ♗e4 23 ♗xc4 ♖xe4 24 ♗xg7 ♖xc4 25 ♗c2 is nice for White) 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 ♗xf6 axb5 (23...dxc4?! 24 bxc4 axb5 25 ♗xb6 ♗xd3 26 ♗g5+ ♖f8 27 ♗xd3) 24 ♗xb6 ♗c7 25 cxb5 with chances for both sides. The text places the queen on the not too safe d-file.

#### 21...♖xb3!

Perhaps White had considered only 21...♖xc4 22 ♗e1! and 21...dxc4 22 bxc4! ♖xc4 23 ♗e1! and Black has problems with the a5-square.

#### 22 ♗b2

22 ♗xb3 walks into 22...dxc4, when 23 ♗a5 ♗c6 fails to help White.

#### 22...d4?!

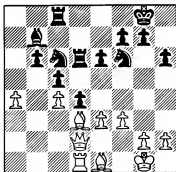
The simple 22...dxc4 23 ♗xc4 ♖a5 seems to leave White with nowhere near a pawn's worth of compensation, 24 ♗xa5 ♗xa5 25

♖d6 altering nothing after 25...♙e4 26 ♖xc8 ♙xb1 etc. Either Black didn't spot ...♙e4 here or he was attracted to the coming material imbalance.

23 ♙e1 ♖a5 24 ♗d2 ♖c6 25 ♖d6

The point.

25...♗xd6 26 ♗xb6 axb6 27 f3!



Tempting Black into 27...dxc3? to open the d-file for the rooks, but then comes 28 ♙h7+ ♖xh7 29 ♗c2+, or 28...♖b8 29 ♗xd6 ♗d8 30 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 31 ♗xd8+ ♖xh7 32 ♗d6.

27...♗cd8 28 e4 e5 29 f4?!

Understandably White wants to get the dark-squared bishop into the game. Wells prefers 29 ♗b2!?, which also looks at the dark squares.

29...♖d7 30 ♙g3 ♗a8 31 ♗a1 ♖b4?!

31...exf4 32 ♙xf4 ♖ce5 plants a knight firmly in the centre, where White is vulnerable on c4 and e4.

32 ♙e2! d3

32...♙xe4 33 fxe5 ♗e6 34 ♙g4 is the point behind White's ♙e2. Note that the clock will have been adding to the complications on the board.

33 fxe5 ♗d4 34 ♙f2

34 ♙g4!? is possible.

34...dxe2?

Another sacrifice that is easy to go for when the seconds are running out. Wells gives 34...♙xc4! 35 ♙xd3 ♖xd3 36 ♗xd3 ♖xe5 37 ♗d6 ♖g4 38 ♗d7 ♗axa4 39 ♗f1

♖xf2 40 ♗xb7 ♖xc4 41 ♗xf7+ with a draw likely.

35 ♙xd4 cxd4 36 ♗xb4 d3 37 ♖f2 ♖xe5 38 ♗e7 ♖g4+ 39 ♖e1 ♙a6 40 ♗d7 ♙xc4? 1-0

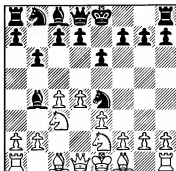
Unfortunately, with Black just about hanging on for the most recent phase of the game, his 40th move leaves the knight hanging. Black could still have put the passed pawns to good use with 40...♖e3 41 ♗xd3 ♖xg2+ 42 ♖f2 e1♗+ 43 ♗xe1 ♖xe1 44 ♖xe1 ♗c8 etc.

Game 3

Pogorelov-Moiseenko

Santo Domingo 2002

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♙b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♖e2 ♖e4

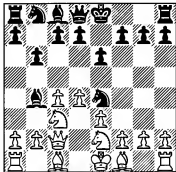


A rather simplistic approach, perhaps, but reducing White's attacking force serves to alleviate Black's defensive task, particularly if White is to build up a territorial lead. As well as sending the knight to work with the bishops (...♙b7 should be coming soon) to concentrate on the e4-square, the f7-pawn is free to advance, and Black has more breathing space on the kingside.

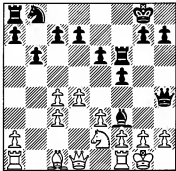
6 ♙d2

The tidy response, offering Black the opportunity to bag a bishop. If you don't fancy surrendering a share of the dark squares so early in the proceedings, then another way to

both develop and contest e4 is with the major alternative 6 ♖c2



Now 6...f5 is possible, when 7 a3 ♖xc3+ 8 ♖xc3 ♖b7 leads to lines discussed below. The main move is 6...♖b7, and a couple of White's options allow Black to exploit the open h4-d8 diagonal. For example 7 ♖g3?! ♖h4! 8 ♖d3 f5 9 0-0 ♖xc3 10 bxc3 0-0 was seen in Bareev-Zsinka, Naestved 1988, when White self-destructed: 11 ♖e2?! (11 ♖h1 followed by f2-f3 is an unlikely resource) 11...♖f6 12 ♖xe4? ♖xe4 13 ♖d1 ♖f1 0-1



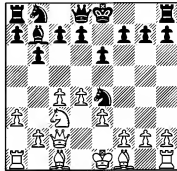
Whoops. After 14 gxf3 ♖h6 15 ♖e1 ♖xh2+ 16 ♖f1 ♖h3+ mate will be delivered on h1, while 14 ♖e1 ♖g6 spells the end in view of another mate on h1, this time after 15 g3 ♖xh2+! 16 ♖xh2 ♖h6+ etc.

7 ♖f4 is seen and can lead to interesting play, e.g. 7...f5 8 ♖d3 0-0 9 0-0 ♖xc3 10 bxc3 ♖d6 11 ♖b1 c5 12 e4 as in Sherbakov-

Kiselev, Russian Team Championship 1994. It seems White has less fun after the simple 7...♖xc3 8 bxc3 ♖c7 (8...♖d6 9 e4 e5 10 ♖d5 ♖c6 11 ♖c3 exd4 12 cxd4 ♖b4 13 ♖b3 ♖xd5 14 cxd5 was also okay for Black in Kastanieda-Yuferov, Moscow 1995) 9 f3 d6 10 ♖d3 g6 11 0-0 ♖d7 12 e4. This might appear rather timid from Black's point of view but worked out fine in Nakamura-De Firmian, Seattle 2003: 12...♖g5 13 ♖e2 ♖xc1 14 ♖xc1 ♖e7 15 ♖e3 e5 16 ♖c2 (16 f4 at least uses White's extra space) 16...♖a6 17 ♖d3 0-0 18 ♖a4 ♖e6 19 ♖b5 ♖xb5 20 cxb5 d5 and the game was heading for a draw.

7 f3 ♖xc3 8 ♖xc3 ♖h4+! 9 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 10 ♖xf2 ♖xc3 11 bxc3 c5 clamps down on the c-pawn(s) and is comfortable for Black.

7 a3 is the simple way to deal with the pin and attention on c3. Then 7...♖xc3 8 axb4 ♖xc2 9 ♖xc2 ♖g5 10 ♖f1 ♖h4 11 ♖d2 ♖c4 12 ♖d1 ♖c6 13 h3 (Guliev-Kiselev, Vladivostok 1994) is balanced, although a3xb4 has probably helped White. Consequently the main line is 7...♖xc3+ 8 ♖xc3

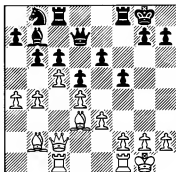


Black can either support e4 or reduce White's interest in it. Thus after 8...f5 there is, for example, 9 ♖d3 ♖xc3 10 ♖xc3 0-0 11 0-0 d6 12 b4 ♖d7 13 f3 ♖e7 14 ♖b2 c5 15 ♖a1 ♖ae8 16 ♖c2 which was marginally better for White in Machelett-Hemmann, Gelsenkirchen 2001, but with 9 d5! White seeks to punish Black's advance, challenging

c6, opening the a1-h8 diagonal and obstructing the b7-bishop. Then after 9...♖xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♗e7 11 dxc6 dxc6 White is ready to post his bishop on b2. 12 b4 a5 13 ♖b2 axb4 14 axb4 ♖xa1+ 15 ♖xa1 0-0 is level (each side has sufficient pressure on the long diagonals) and 12...♖d7 13 ♖b2 e5 14 c5! bxc5 15 ♖b5 considerably less clear. I prefer 12 b3, vacating b2 but reserving expansion until White is better prepared to meet ...a7-a5.

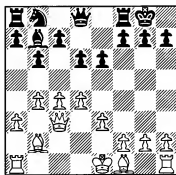
8...♖xc3 9 ♗xc3 leaves a total of just four minor pieces on the board and Black's diagonal still intact. White's queen already stands on what is essentially White's diagonal and, as is often the case, he has the lion's share of the dark squares. With this in mind b2-b4 is a more appropriate means of introducing the extra bishop into play than b2-b3 because a timely c4-c5 is supported. However, perhaps the most important factor is the early simplification, White's reduced firepower at only the ninth move being the reasoning behind ...♖e4. Black's resulting freedom affords him a number of options. 9...♗h4 pins the f2-pawn, ruling out f2-f3 and therefore keeping White's bishop tied to the defence of g2. In Franco Ocampos-Lima, Salamanca 1989 White went for global expansion, 10 b4 0-0 11 ♖b2 d6 12 d5 e5 13 ♖d3 c6 14 e4 prompting Black into 14...f5! in a bid to undermine White's grip. There followed 15 exf5 cxd5 16 cxd5 ♖xd5 17 0-0 ♖c6 18 f4 with a complicated struggle ahead.

Simply developing with 9...0-0 is the most common course. 10 b4 is consistent. (10 f3?! ♗h4+ 11 g3 ♗h5 12 e4 f5 is exactly what Black is waiting for; 10 b3 d6 11 ♖b2 ♗f6 leads to 9...♗f6, below), when 10...d5 is illogical considering which minor pieces Black has left in play. In fact 11 ♖b2 dxc4? 12 ♖xc4 ♖xg2 13 d5 f6 14 dxe6 (Dolmatov) is decisive, e.g. 14...♗e7 15 ♖g1 ♖h3 16 ♗xf6! ♖xf6 17 ♖xf6 etc. J.Fernandez-Kuzmin, Budapest 1978 continued 11...♖d7 12 ♖c1 ♖c8 13 c5 c6 14 ♖d3 ♖b8 15 a4! ♗d7 16 ♗c2 f5 17 0-0

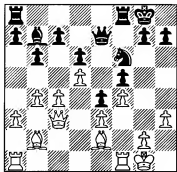


Unfortunately for Black the position is not sufficiently closed to justify the poor combination of the Stonewall structure and light-squared bishop. 17...♖a6?! 18 b5! cxb5 runs into 19 ♗e2 with a great position for White. Black tried 17...b5 18 ♖a1 ♖a6 but 19 a5 ♖ce8 20 f3 saw White switch to the centre and prepare for the inevitable, and desirable, e3-e4 break. In Sturua-Moisceenko, Istanbul 2003 White tried to improve on the equality that results from 10...a5 11 ♖b2 axb4 12 axb4 ♖xa1+ 13 ♖xa1 ♗h4! with the more ambitious 11 b5 d6 12 c5!?, when 12...dxc5 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♖b2 is unclear. The game continuation was even more complex after 12...c6 13 ♖b2 cxb5 14 d5 ♗g5 15 c6 and White's idea definitely requires further testing.

Returning to the position after 10 b4, the main line runs 10...d6 11 ♖b2



11...f5 continues the theme on the light squares, a good example being Merriman-Tan, England 2000, when 12 c5 ♖c7 13 ♜c1 ♜f7 14 ♜b3 ♖d5 15 ♖c4 ♖xc4 16 ♜xc4 ♖d7 17 0-0 ♖f6 produced an interesting battle in terms of which minor piece will have the most influence. For the moment the knight is the busier of the two. Reacting to the arrival of Black's pawn on f5 with the counter d4-d5 should by now be familiar, which explains why 12 d5 is the choice. The reply 12...e5 simultaneously closes both long diagonals, prompting White to mix it up for the bishop pair with 13 c5 bxc5 14 bxc5, when NCO gives 14...♖a6!? 15 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 16 c6 ♖c5 17 ♜c2 ♜b8 as unclear (18 ♖xe5 ♖b3 19 ♜b1 dxe5 20 ♜xb3 ♜xd5). In Ornstein-Hellsten, Borlange 1992 White decided against such trades and maintained the tension: 13 ♖d3 ♖d7 14 0-0 ♖e7 15 f4 e4 16 ♖c2 ♖f6 17 h3

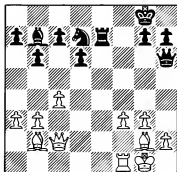


White's latest introduces the possibility of combining the g-file with the long diagonal after the bayonet g2-g4, hence Black's next. 17...♖c8 18 ♖h2 ♖d7 19 ♖e1 a5 20 ♖g3 ♖a4 21 ♖g5 ♖d7 22 ♖fc1 ♖b3 23 b5 a4 and Black's bishop would have been better off defending: 24 ♖d4 ♖ae8 25 ♖c3 ♖e7 26 ♖g1 ♖ff7 27 ♖cc1 ♖f8 28 g4 etc.

11...♖f6 12 ♖c2 ♖d7 13 f3 ♖h6 14 ♖d2 f5 15 0-0-0 ♖ae8 16 ♖c2 e5 17 d5 ♖f6 18 ♖b1 ♖h8 19 ♖a1 appeared fairly uneventful in Postny-Bar, Tel Aviv 2002, but 19...♖d8

20 ♖d3 e4 21 ♖c2 b5!? 22 cxb5 ♖xd5 23 f4 ♖c4 24 a4 ♖g6 25 h3 soon took the game down a much more entertaining path. White secures an advantage after 11...♖d7 12 c5! (12 f3?! ♖h4+ 13 g3 ♖h5 14 e4 f5 serves only to provide Black with an easy target in the form of the clumsy looking centre) 12...bxc5 13 dxc5 ♖f6 14 c6 ♖c8 15 ♖d3.

9...♖f6 dissuades White from d4-d5. Khenkin-Pavlovic, Moscow 1988 went 10 b3 d6 11 ♖b2 0-0 12 f3 ♖h4+ 13 g3 ♖h6 14 e4 ♖d7 15 ♖g2 f5 16 exf5 ♖xf5 17 0-0 e5 18 dxe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖c2 ♖e7 20 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 21 ♖xe7 ♖xe7



Black has a fine game here. White's g2-bishop is a poor piece (unlike its rival on b7), but trading with f3-f4 would leave White with a few weak squares (e3 and e4 being particularly noticeable). Meanwhile, on the queenside, b3 is susceptible to attack from the knight, while b3-b4 runs the risk of creating a new target on c4. White might do better with 12 ♖c2, when Townsend-Ward, British League 2001 was approximately equal after 12...♖h6 13 0-0-0 ♖d7 14 ♖b1 f5 15 f3 ♖ac8 (15...♖xe3?? 16 ♖c1), although Black was invited to take control as the middle-game phase came into play: 16 ♖c1?! ♖f6 17 ♖e2 a5 18 e4 fxe4 19 fxe4 ♖g6 20 ♖f3 ♖f6 21 ♖he1 e5 22 d5 ♖c8! 23 ♖e3?! (23 h3) 23...♖g4 and the fixed pawns helped Black.

Before continuing with the main game's 6 ♖d2, worth a mention is 6 f3 which doesn't

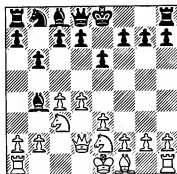
fit in with White's strategy after either 6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♖d6 8 ♜g3 ♖c6 (rather than 8...♗a6?! 9 ♖a4, which slows Black down), or 6...♖c3 7 bxc3 (7 ♖xc3 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♖c6 9 ♗d3 ♖h4+ 10 g3 ♖h3 11 ♖e2 ♗a6 12 ♗a3 0-0-0 13 f4! d5! 14 0-0-0 ♖a5 favoured Black in Merriman-Ward, Isle of Man 1994) 7...♖c7, e.g. 8 ♜g3 (White was under a little pressure after 8 e4 ♖c6 9 ♜g3 ♗a6 10 ♗d3 ♖a5 11 ♖e2 d6 12 0-0 ♖d7 13 ♖b1 h5! 14 ♖e1 h4 15 ♖f1 c5! in I.Sokolov-Johansen, Manila Olympiad 1992) 8...♖c6 9 ♗d3 ♗a6 10 0-0 ♖a5 11 ♖e2 d5! (11...0-0 12 e4, 11...c5 12 d5 and 11...c6 12 f4! all seem favourable for White) 12 cxd5 ♗xd3 13 ♖xd3 ♖xd5 (better than 13...exd5?! 14 ♖f5 0-0 15 e4) 14 e4 ♖c4 15 ♖e3 0-0 (15...0-0-0!) 16 f4 c5.

All in all, 6 f3 would seem to fail to present Black with any problems.

**6...♖xd2**

Both sides are happy with this trade. Instead Winer-Coleman, Connecticut 2003 continued 6...♗xc3 7 ♖xc3 ♗b7 8 ♖g4 0-0 9 ♖xe4 f5 10 ♖g5! ♗xe4 11 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 12 f3 ♗b7 13 ♖c1 c5 14 ♗d3 d6 15 ♗e2 ♖c6 16 ♗c3 g6 17 ♖hd1 with an easy edge for White thanks to the bishop pair.

**7 ♖xd2**



**7...♗b7**

Taking residence on the natural diagonal. Black has also tried 7...♗a6 8 a3 ♗xc3 (8...♗e7 9 ♖f4 ♖c6 10 b4 ♗b7 11 ♗e2 0-0

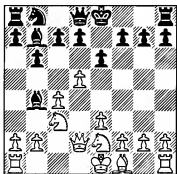
12 0-0 gives White a nice space advantage) 9 ♖xc3 d5, and now 10 b4 is probably enough for an edge after 10...dxc4 11 b5 ♗b7 12 e4 and 10...♗xc4 11 ♗xc4 dxc4 12 ♖e2. Instead 10 b3 ♖c6 11 ♗e2 dxc4 12 ♖b1 borrows an idea of White's seen in the 5...♗a6 line. Black cannot hold on to the pawn with 12...♖a5 in view of 13 b4 ♖b3 14 ♖xb3, so White allows the tension to build before recapturing on c4. Epishin-De Firmian, Copenhagen 2002 went 12...0-0 13 0-0 ♖e7 14 ♖fd1 ♖d7 15 bxc4 ♖fd8 16 ♖c2 with the more comfortable game for White.

7...d5 is rather rigid and leads to a very slight advantage to White, e.g. 8 a3 ♗e7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 g3 0-0 11 ♗g2 c6 12 0-0 ♗b7 13 ♖fd1 ♖d7 14 ♖f4 or 10 ♖f4 c6 11 ♗d3 0-0 12 ♖ce2 ♗d6 13 h4 ♖e8 14 ♖c2 h6 15 h5 ♗xf4 16 ♖xf4 ♖d6 17 0-0 ♖d7 18 ♖fe1 ♗b7 19 b4, Speelman-Korchnoi, Monaco 1992.

The main line is 7...0-0 8 a3 ♗e7, when 9 e4 d6 10 f4 f5 11 exf5 exf5 12 g3 ♗b7 13 d5 ♗f6 14 ♖d4 ♖e8+ 15 ♖f2 ♗xd4+ 16 ♖xd4 ♗c8 17 ♗d3 ♗d7 18 ♖a1 a5 didn't work out well for White in Carstensen-Jensen, Copenhagen 2003. 9 ♖f4 also clamps down on d5, leading to interesting play after 9...d6 10 ♗e2 ♗b7 11 0-0 ♖d7 12 ♖fd1 ♗g5 13 b4 ♖e7 14 ♖a1 ♗b6 15 ♗f1 g6 16 ♖c2 c6, as in Aleksandrov-Ehlvest, Polanica Zdroj 1997. Once again such positions require patience, although, from a practical standpoint, the territorial lead tends to be easier for White to build on than for Black to deal with. Finally, with 9 d5 e5 10 g3 d6 11 ♗g2 ♖d7 12 0-0 White hopes the extra knight will help in the closed position. Now 12...♗b7 transposes to the main game, but in Shaked-Adams, Fontys 1997 Black decided against such a posting: 12...h5 13 f4 h4 14 ♖a1 a5 15 b3 ♗a6 16 ♖c2 ♖e8 17 ♗h3 ♗c8 18 ♗g2 ♖f6 19 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 20 f5 c6 21 ♖c1 b5 and Black was not as cramped as had first appeared.

**8 a3**

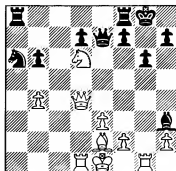
White prefers to see what plans Black has for the bishop before committing himself. Otherwise there is 8 d5!?



By taking a share of Black's territory White intends to make the d5-point a stronghold (rather than a target) with which to close out the long diagonal and, on a more positive note, provide his own forces with more room for manoeuvre. Here 8...b5! has insufficient punch when White has not yet played g2-g3, and 9 a3! ♖xc3 10 ♖xc3 is a clear advantage for White. In Avrukh-Vovsha, Ubeda 2001 Black began a fixation with d5 that led to a severely compromised queenside after 8...exd5 9 cxd5 0-0 10 g3 a5 11 ♖g2 ♖a6 12 0-0 c6?! (12...♗e8, to make way for the flexible ...♗f8, keeps the powder dry) 13 ♖fd1 ♗f6 14 ♗c2 and the c6-d5 stand-off favoured only White. This is because ...c6xd5 and a subsequent recapture (White will own the d5-square) simply leaves Black with a weak d-pawn, which means White has the luxury of being able to engineer a well timed d5xc6, after which Black's queenside will come under fire. Indeed this is exactly what Avrukh achieved in the game after 14...♗ac8 15 ♗ac1 ♖xc3 16 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 17 ♖xc3 ♖c5 18 ♖d4 ♖a6 19 ♖cd1 b5 20 dxc6 dxc6 21 a3 ♗c7 22 ♖d6 ♖b7 23 ♖e2 etc.

Better is 8...♖a6 in order to quickly introduce the knight into the game. A well-known example of what can happen next is Shirov-

Adams, Leon 1995, which went 9 a3! ♖xc3 (9...♖d6 and 9...♗e7 both leave White with a slight edge after 10 ♖d1) 10 ♖xc3 ♖c5 11 ♖d1 (11 ♖b1 has been suggested, with a comfortable space advantage after 11...d6 12 b4 ♖d7 13 ♖c2) 11...a5 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♖a6 14 ♖b5 0-0 15 ♖c2 with chances for both sides. White seemed to be having the most fun after 15...♗e7 16 d6! (16 ♖xc7? ♖xc7 17 d6 ♗h4 18 dxc7 ♖xg2 19 ♖g1 ♗xh2) 16...♗g5 17 dxc7 ♗xg2 18 ♖f1 ♗xh2?! (Dautov's 18...♗ac8! improves) 19 ♗d6!, prompting the proposition 15...exd5! 16 cxd5 ♗e7 17 d6 cxd6 18 ♖xd6 ♖xg2 19 ♖g1 ♖h3 20 ♗d4 g6



This position has been assessed as unclear. Of course this is a fair evaluation, although I have a feeling White should be able to earn something from the bind (Black's pieces are doing very little).

9 g3 ♖c5 10 ♖g2 retains the tension, 10...a5! being unclear according to Dautov. However, Black also has 10...♖a6! to tempt White into 11 dxe6 dxe6! 12 ♖xa8 ♖d3+ 13 ♖f1 ♗xa8 14 e4 ♖xc4 or 12 ♖c6+ ♖e7 13 ♖xa8 ♖d3+ 14 ♖f1 ♗xa8 15 e4 ♖xc4 16 ♗g5+ ♖f8 with attractive compensation. In fact White should meet the threat to the c4-pawn with equal aggression: 11 ♖d1! ♖xc4! 12 ♗d4 ♖xc2 13 ♗xe2 (13 ♗xg7? sees White come off worse after 13...exd1 14 ♗xh8+ ♖e7 15 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 16 ♖xd1 ♖d3 17 ♖e2 ♖xb2 18 ♖b5 c6 19 dxc6 dxc6 20



♙xc6 ♜d2+ 21 ♖f3 ♣d3 etc.) 13...♙xc3 14 ♜xc3 0-0 15 b4 (not 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♙xa8? ♜xa8) 15...♣a4 16 ♜c2 b5 17 dxe6 fxe6 18 ♙xa8 ♜xa8 19 e4 and the onus was on Black to demonstrate full compensation in Bareev-I.Sokolov, Madrid 1994.

### 8...♙e7

NCO gives only 8...♙xc3 9 ♣xc3 0-0 10 d5 and an evaluation of slightly better for White. Again taste can be a factor, particularly if Black is confident that he can find sufficient play despite having limited room in which to manoeuvre. Consequently White has also tried 10 ♙d3, keeping his options open in the centre by simply not bothering to address the pressure on g2. In Sadler-Adams, London 1989 Black was unwilling to allow his opponent this luxury and opted to take up the challenge, 10...♙xg2 11 ♜g1 ♙f3 12 e4 ♖h8 13 ♜c3 ♙h5 14 ♜g5 g6 15 ♖d2 (White must have enjoyed this move) followed by ♜ag1 providing White with compensation. With the text Black preserves the bishop in view of its potential to punish White later in the game. Meanwhile, not exchanging on c3 has left White needing to spend an extra tempo to continue development.

### 9 d5

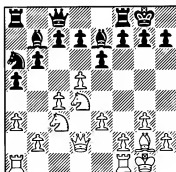
This prepares the kingside fianchetto. The alternative is to make way for the bishop with 9 ♣f4, although 9...♙g5 10 ♙d3 0-0! looks okay for Black, who 'threatens' to damage White's structure with ...♙xf4 and can react to 11 0-0 with 11...♣d5 (or 11...♣c6 followed by ...e6-e5).

### 9...0-0

In Hoi-U.Nielsen, Gausdal 1990 Black brought the knight into the game via a6 because he had plans for the d6-square. There followed 9...a5 10 b3 ♣a6 11 g3 0-0 12 ♙g2 e5 13 0-0 ♙d6! 14 f4 (14 ♣b5 helps protect a3 and monitors both d6 and c7) 14...f5 15 fxe5 ♙xe5 16 ♣d4 g6 17 ♜ae1 ♜f6 18 ♖h1 and a draw was agreed just as the game was beginning to warm up.

### 10 g3 d6

This seems perfectly natural, freeing d7 for the knight, erecting a modest centre and ruling out losing a piece later after d5-d6. 10...a5 11 ♙g2 ♣a6 12 0-0 (threatening 13 d6 – you have been warned) 12...♜c8 13 ♣d4 was the course of Suarez-Soppe, Mar del Plata 1990.



White has such good control over d5 that it is surprising why Black now challenged the square with 13...c6. Perhaps Black was expecting or inviting 14 d6!?, when 14...♙xd6 15 ♣xe6 dxe6 16 ♜xd6 ♜d8 17 ♜f4 ♜d2 activates, but then 18 ♜fd1! favours White in view of 18...♜xb2 19 ♣a4 ♜b3 20 ♜db1 ♜xb1+ 21 ♜xb1 and b6 falls. Anyway, Black's sparsely populated kingside prompted an advance, and after 14 f4 ♜d8 15 f5 exd5 16 f6! ♙xf6 17 ♜xf6 gxf6 18 ♣f5 ♜c7 White could have finished off nicely with 19 ♜d4 (in fact he finished off quite inaccurately with 19 e4, when Black's resignation was a questionable alternative to 19...♣c5 20 ♜h6 ♣e6 which, it seems, holds).

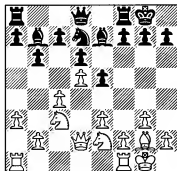
10...exd5 11 ♙g2 c6 12 cxd5 e5 was time-consuming in D.Gurevich-de Firmian, USA Championship 1986. The point behind moving the c-pawn twice is to generate a bit of breathing space on the queenside without allowing White a piece outpost on d5. However, after 13 0-0 (threatening d5-d6 again 13...d6 14 b4! ♣d7 15 ♜ab1 ♙a6 16 ♜fc1 ♜c8 17 ♣f4 ♣e5 18 ♜d1 White's long

sighted major piece set-up was enough for an edge.

### 11 ♖g2 e5 12 0-0

12 e4 would probably be the club player's choice in such a position, simply 'connecting' the centre pawns and accentuating the space advantage. Indeed this strategy is not bad even without the dark-squared bishop, and 12...♖d7 13 ♖c2 ♖f6 14 0-0 g6 15 b4 ♖g7 16 ♖h3 ♖e7 17 ♖c1 ♖c8 18 ♖b3 ♖f6 19 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 was about equal in Tataev-Pripis, Moscow 1992, the exchanges having served to reduce some of the tension in the KID type situation. The problem with e3-e4 here is that it effectively surrenders e4 as a potential outpost, restricts the bishop on g2 and might even have negative implications in terms of the dark squares – concerns White does not have with the pawn still on e3.

### 12...♖d7



Thus far Black has settled for limited elbow room, content to prepare his forces for battle. Due to the closed nature of the diagram position we can assume that knights will have more fun and, depending on future events, Black either has a poor bishop on e7 or a potential game winner. And herein lies an important factor, namely White's success or otherwise in avoiding trouble on the dark squares. Meanwhile, on the light squares, White will enjoy supremacy whatever combination of minor pieces is in play. In other words, White's extra space, while relevant, is

but one ingredient in a position that requires a decent overall appreciation of how the game might unfold.

### 13 f4

The closed centre affords White the option of further expansion, although this game suggests that Black has nothing to be afraid of.

### 13...a5!?

With Black already to some extent committed to his queenside structure this advance is appropriate, keeping an eye on b4 and in certain circumstances introducing ...a5-a4 as a means of support for an outpost for the knight on c5. Even the modest push of the a-pawn provides Black with a little extra space and, for the moment, hand-to-hand combat in the centre is inadvisable. This was demonstrated in Jelen-Grosar, Slovenian Championship 1992, when 13...f5?! 14 e4! highlighted Black's vulnerability on the light squares: 14...exf4 15 ♖xf4 ♖g5 16 exf5 ♖xf5 17 ♖c2 being clearly better for White. Of course with the bishop pair Black should be looking for favourable ways in which to open up, particularly on the dark squares. However, being quite cramped, it will take some time before Black is able to apply some pressure of his own making.

### 14 ♖c2

Preventing the often desirable ...a5-a4, which would also fix White's queenside so that supporting the c4-pawn with b2-b3 would leave a fresh weakness on a3 after ...a4xb3. Notice how by nudging the queen to c2 White no longer defends e3, while d4 also has less protection.

### 14...h5!?

Black can get away with this move, which addresses any possible further advances from White, because he intends to post his bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal, when ...g7-g6 will fit in well.

### 15 h3 g6 16 ♖f3 exf4 17 exf4

A logical looking part of White's general plan. 17 gxf4 keeps an eye on the centre (d4)

and might better suit knights, the downside being the e-pawn, which could come under fire.

17...♗f6 18 g4

Again White sees no reason to abort the kingside operation. Perhaps 18 ♖ad1 followed by ♘d4 should be considered now rather than later. Clearly a policy of general expansion works well with a knight on d4, the outpost affording White extra control across the board.

18...hxg4 19 hxg4 ♗g7 20 g5

Mission accomplished for White, who has grabbed more enemy territory, with both e5 and f6 unavailable to Black. However, a closer look at the diagram position reveals that Black's lot has improved considerably over the last six or seven moves, his influence on the dark squares changing from an almost defensive stance with the pawn on e5 to what is now an aggressive relocation of the bishop to g7. In fact White is beginning to miss his own bishop, and herein lies an important potential problem with the 6 ♗d2 line should White underestimate his opponent's long-term prospects on the dark squares. The closed nature of the early midgame can lure White, with the knight pair, into a false sense of security, but seeking to exploit the space advantage is bound to open the game in some way, and such over-extension does Black's job for him.

20...♞e7 21 ♖g2 ♚ae8 22 ♚ad1

Black is making his presence felt so quickly that it might be time to forget about d4 and instead contest the e-file with 22 ♚ae1.

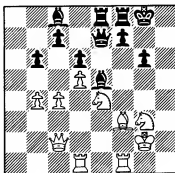
22...♗c8 23 b4 axb4 24 axb4 ♘e5!

Rather than settle for being slightly worse, Black's last few moves have set up this sacrifice, designed to further reduce White's already limited cover of the dark squares.

25 fxе5 ♞xg5+ 26 ♘g3 ♗xe5 27 ♘ce4 ♞e7

For the piece Black has two pawns and domination of the dark squares, resulting in a

balanced game. White has no way of aggressively using the extra piece because he cannot gain a foothold for his forces, while Black is well placed to send his pawns down the kingside. The most striking feature of the position is the enormous bishop on e5, and this should serve as a reminder as to the long-term hazards for White of this variation.



28 ♞d2?!

Again 28 ♚de1 is sensible. The text is a typical reaction to a sacrifice, White believing that the best course is simplification.

28...f5 29 ♞g5

The (negative) point. After 29 ♘g5? ♗xg3 30 ♖xg3 f4+ Black wins (31 ♖h4 ♞g7), while 29 ♘c3 ♞h4 30 ♘ce2 ♗xg3 31 ♘xg3 f4 32 ♘e4 ♗h3+ demonstrates why Black dropped his bishop back to c8 earlier.

29...fxe4 30 ♞xg6+ ♞g7 31 ♗xe4

Restoring material parity, but White is sure to struggle against the bishop pair, and the dark squares are still a problem.

31...♗g4 32 ♚de1 ♞xg6 33 ♗xg6 ♚a8 34 ♗xf8+ ♖xf8 35 ♚f1+ ♖g8 36 ♗f5 ♚a3 37 ♘e4 ♚a2+ 38 ♖h1 ♗xf5 39 ♗xf5 ♚a4

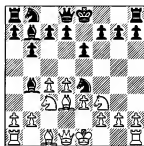
White is now paying for his numerous pawn advances, and after...

40 b5 ♗xc4 41 ♘g5 ♗c5 42 ♘e6 ♗xb5 43 ♘xc7 ♗c5 44 ♘e6 ♗xd5 45 ♗f8+ ♖h7 46 ♗b8 ♗b5 47 ♖g2 ♗b3

...the result was in no doubt, Black winning the game thirteen moves later... 0-1 (60).

## CHAPTER TWO

### 4...b6: White Plays 5 ♖d3 and ♘f3



1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♞c3 ♜b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♜d3 ♜b7 6 ♟f3 ♟e4

Black is not without choice against this more traditional set-up after 5 ♜d3 ♜b7 6 ♟f3. Games 4 and 5 deal with the Dutch approach involving 6...♟e4 followed by ...f7-f5 etc. Game 4 features the 'safe' 7 ♝c2, defending c3, and the early middle-game gets going with considerable attention given to the e4-square. This square also sees action in Game 5, but this time White's provocative 7 0-0 tempts Black into winning a pawn. Whether or not Black accepts he is in for a rougher ride here anyway compared with 7 ♝c2. The main idea covered in Game 6 is Black's ...c7-c5xd4, which leaves White with a c4-d4 centre and Black the modest but flexible d6-e6 set-up. 6...0-0 7 0-0 d5 is the subject of Games 7 and 8, which see two contrasting approaches from White in his quest to generate something against Black's central claim. In Game 7 White throws subtlety out of the window with 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♟e5 with the blunt plan of drumming up a kingside attack (helped along with the anti-positional f2-f4). The queenside is the focus of attention in Game 8 – the notes of which include examples of White allowing ...d5xc4. This time White

follows the trade on d5 with the clamping b2-b4.

#### Game 4

#### Provotorov-Ovetchkin

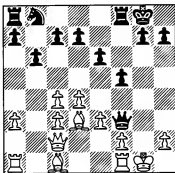
Voronezh 2003

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♞c3 ♜b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♜d3 ♜b7 6 ♟f3 ♟e4

Having combined the Nimzo with a Queen's Indian, Black's latest prepares to add a Dutch flavour to the mix, exploiting his control of e4 and making way for further support with ...f7-f5. In the meantime there is the threat to capture on c3 for White consider, the two main options being the obvious 7 ♝c2 and the more combative continuation 7 0-0.

7 ♝c2 ♜xc3+

The immediate 7...f5 is the genuine Dutch move, 8 0-0 ♜xc3 9 bxc3 then transposing to our main game. 8 ♜d2 ♜xc3 9 ♜xc3 0-0 10 0-0-0 ♟a6 11 ♟b1 led to an early draw in Nedobora-O.Foisor, Zaragoza 1995, while 8 a3?! ♜xc3+ 9 bxc3 0-0 merely gives Black an extra tempo on normal lines, D.Martin-Gustafsson, Sas van Ghent 1996, going 10 ♟d2 ♝h4 11 ♟xe4 ♜xe4 12 0-0 ♜xg2?! 13 ♜xg2 ♝g4+ 14 ♟h1 ♝f3+ 15 ♟g1



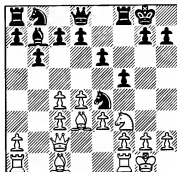
Black turned down the perpetual: 15...Nf6! 16 Nd1 Wh3 17 Qe4 (17 Qh1 Nh6 18 f4 Wf3+) 17...fxe4 18 Wxe4 Qc6 and White was in trouble. It is worth noting that, at club level, the more standard move order with 7...f5 has the advantage of giving White the opportunity to err with the knee-jerk reaction 8 a3.

After 8 0-0 Black has tried the other capture with 8...Qxc3 9 bxc3, the point being to damage White's kingside: 9...Qxf3 10 gxf3 Qd6 (or first 10...Ng5+) with chances for both sides. At least White has six 'centre' pawns to add to the bishop pair here, and can continue with something along the lines of f3-f4, tuck the king in on h1 and bring the rook to the g-file. Fear of broken kingside pawns backfired on White in Popa-Anuta, Ploiesti 2002 after 10 cxb4 Wg5 11 g3 Wg4 12 Qe1 Qc6 13 a3 h5 etc. While there is nothing wrong with ...Qxc3, it is the e4-square around which the basic ideas of the Nimzo revolve and, after all, Black's dark-squared bishop has already volunteered to give itself up for the cause.

#### 8 bxc3 f5 9 0-0

White seemed afraid of what he might have thought was castling into an attack in Mancini-Ikonnikov, Bethune 1997, but his strategy proved quite unsuccessful after 9 c5 0-0 10 Qa3 Nf6 11 Qe5 d6 12 cxd6 cxd6 13 Qc4 b5 14 Qb2 Ng6 15 Ng1 Qa6 16 Qd1 Wh4 17 h3 Qg5.

#### 9...0-0

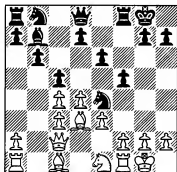


#### 10 Qd2

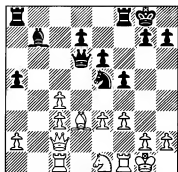
The most popular choice, challenging the enemy knight and hoping to 'develop' with its removal (after ...Qxd2). Of course White can also seek to evict the knight with tempo after f2-f3 by dropping the knight back to e1, but from here another post must be sought, and Black might be happy to keep his busy knight in play. Here are a few sample lines involving 10 Qc1:

After the simple 10...Qc6 Black is happy to temporarily part with a pawn in the event of 11 Qxe4? fxe4 12 Wxc4 because he emerges with a fine game after 12...Qa5 etc. Consequently the consistent 11 f3 is played, when all three available squares have been tried. 11...Qd6 seems to add momentum to the anyway desirable c4-c5 advance, e.g. 12 Qa3 Nf6 13 c5, as in Florea-Bunzmann, Apolda 1997 and Vilela-Vallejo Pons, Havana 1998. In reply to 11...Qf6 Hansen suggests 12 Nb1! with the idea of following 12...d6 13 e4 e5 with the thematic 14 c5, threatening to open up for the bishop pair. This leaves 11...Qg5, when 12 We2 leaves c2 available for the knight, working out well for White in Portisch-Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1985 after 12...We7! 13 Qc2 e5 14 Qa3 d6 15 c5! etc. Putting the queen on the a3-f6 diagonal helped only White here, hence Van der Wiel's proposed improvement 12...e5.

10...c5 is logical.



Setting the stall out on the kingside with ...f7-f5 does not preclude acting on the other flank, and blockading in this traditional fashion rules out a strike on the dark squares with c4-c5 and fixes White with a target on c4. Now after 11 ♔f3 ♔d6 the focus turns to the queenside after 12 ♔a3, e.g. 12...♞c7 13 ♜c1 ♔c6! 14 dxc5 bxc5 15 ♔xc5 ♔e5 16 ♔b4 a5 17 ♔xd6 ♞xd6



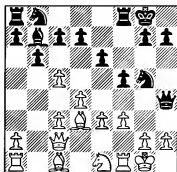
Black's compensation for the pawn was obvious in D.Dumitrache-A.Vajda, Sovata 1998.

Alternatively Black can attend to the queenside with his knight and use the queen to support ...e6-e5, so that after 12...♔a6 13 ♞e2 ♞e7, with the queenside secure, Black is ready to push the e-pawn. In Nenashev-Kasparov, Geneva 1996 White sought to have a say in matters in the centre: 14 e4 fxe4 15 fxe4 ♞xf1+ 16 ♔xf1 e5 17 d5 ♔c7 18

♔g1 ♞f8 19 ♔f3 ♔f7 20 ♔c1 d6 21 ♞b1 ♔c8 22 ♞c2 ♔d7 23 ♔e3, and now came the active retreat 23...♔h8, aiming for f4.

10...♞h4 looks aggressive. After 11 ♔f3 Black got a little carried away in Psakhis-Cesarsky, Tel Aviv 1990, ignoring the attack on his knight to go for the jugular with the not very subtle 11...♞f6?, but the strong GM Psakhis simply wrapped up the full point after 12 g3 ♔xg3 13 ♔g2 ♞g5 14 e4 f4 15 hxg3 ♞xg3 16 e5 1-0. 11...♔f6 12 a4 d6 13 a5 is slightly better for White according to ECO, while 11...♔g5 gives both players more to think about. 12 ♞f2 ♞xf2+ 13 ♞xf2 c5 was level in Rivas Pastor-Karkanaque, Thessaloniki 1988, and in R.Hernandez-Arnason, Palma de Mallorca 1989 Black was able to hold the balance even after allowing c4-c5: 13...d6 14 c5 dxc5 15 dxc5 ♔d7 16 e4 fxe4 17 ♔b5 c6 18 ♔c4 ♔f7 etc.

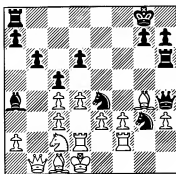
More to the point is 12 c5



Then 12...bxc5 13 ♞b1 ♔c6 14 ♔a3 ♞f6 15 ♞f2 ♞h5 16 dxc5 e5 17 ♔c4+ saw White take the initiative in Ehvest-Vaisser, Volgodonsk 1983, and 12...♞f6 13 ♞f2 ♞xf2+ 14 ♞xf2 bxc5 15 ♞b1 ♔c8 16 e4 also favoured White in Vilkov-Chernushevich, Smolensk 1992. Not surprisingly, once Black's dark-squared bishop has left the board, both players should continue to assess the implications of c4-c5 in these situations.

A more obvious way to try to profit from ...♔xc3 is with an early occupation of the a3-

f8 diagonal, namely 10 ♖a3. I can see this happening rather often at club level, but Zamfirescu-Brahna, Romanian Team Championship 1993 is not a good advert, White's confidence in defending the kingside apparently unjustified: 10...♞f6 (there is a psychological advantage to be had in being 'forced' to play an aggressive move) 11 ♞ad1 c5 12 ♖e1 ♞h6 13 f3 ♞h4 14 h3 ♖g5 15 ♞f2 (part of the plan, but Black is being set no problems, and can therefore continue to further the attacking cause at leisure) 15...d6 16 ♖f1 ♖d7 17 ♞dd2 ♖f6 18 ♞b1 ♖c6 19 ♖e2 ♖h5 20 ♖d1 ♖g3 21 ♖c1 e5 22 ♖xf5 e4 23 ♖g4 ♖a4+ 24 ♖c2 exf3 25 gxh3 ♖5e4



White's awkwardly passive display thus far is hardly a model example, but Black's punishment is. The game ended 26 fxe4 ♞xg4+! 27 ♞dc2 ♞xh3 28 ♖d2 ♞h1+ 29 ♖c1 ♞f8! 30 ♖d2 ♖xc4+ 31 ♖c1 ♖xf2 0-1.

Returning to the position after 10 ♖d2, Black's favoured response is to send the queen into action.

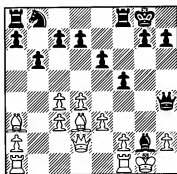
**10...♞h4 11 f3**

11 g3? is the reaction Black is looking for. In fact there are two ways with which to ignore the attack on the queen. The logic behind 11...♞f6 is obvious, 12 gxx4?? allowing 12...♞g6+ 13 ♖h1 ♖xf2 mate. Meanwhile, 12 ♖xe4 fxe4! 13 gxx4?? ♞g6+ 14 ♖h1 exd3+ is another way for White to lose, which leaves 12 ♖xe4 ♖xe4, e.g. 13 ♖xe4 ♞xe4 14 ♞xe4 fxe4 and White is too weak

on the light squares.

Another option is 11...♖g5 with the threat of mate on h3. Perhaps 12 f3 is a better way than 12 d5 to close the long diagonal, but 12 e4? fxe4 13 gxx4 doesn't work in view of 13...♖h3+! 14 ♖g2 exd3+ 15 ♖xh3 dxc2 etc.

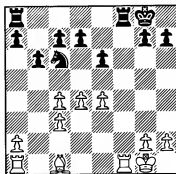
11 ♖a3? walks into 11...♖xd2 12 ♞xd2 ♖xg2!



We saw this idea earlier in D.Martin-Gustafsson in the note to Black's 7th move. After 13 ♖xg2 (13 ♖xf8 ♖f3 14 ♞fb1 ♞h3 mates) 13...♞g4+ 14 ♖h1 ♞f3+ 15 ♖g1 Gustafsson's 15...♞f6 is even more effective here (as the eagle-eyed Hansen also points out), 16 ♞fd1 ♞h3 being decisive.

**11...♖xd2**

11...♖g5 is possible here, too, when White should resist the urge to expand in the centre: 12 e4? fxe4 13 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 16 fxe4 ♖c6

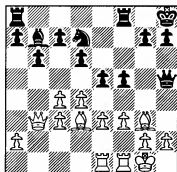


The diagram position was reached in Eckert-Miles, Las Vegas 1997. White was soon made to regret his gamble on the light squares after 17  $\text{b}1$  e5 18  $\text{c}3$   $\text{f}e8$  19 d5  $\text{a}5$  20 c5  $\text{c}4$  21  $\text{f}2$  bxc5 22  $\text{c}2$   $\text{d}6$  23  $\text{d}3$  c4+ 24  $\text{c}2$   $\text{c}4$  etc.

Instead 12 f4 sends the knight to f7 in circumstances that seem to favour White, e.g. 12... $\text{g}4$  13 d5  $\text{f}7$  14 e4 exd5 15 exd5 when White's knight is ready to jump to action, or 12... $\text{f}7$  13 e4 fxe4 14  $\text{c}4$   $\text{c}6$  15  $\text{a}3$  d6 16  $\text{a}e1$ , and White is beginning to take control.

### 12 $\text{d}2$ $\text{c}6$

Black has also brought the knight to d7: 12...d6 13  $\text{e}1$   $\text{h}5$  14  $\text{b}3$  (Hansen gives 14  $\text{g}3$ ?) with the idea of striking on the dark squares with c4-c5) 14... $\text{d}7$  15  $\text{g}3$   $\text{h}8$  16  $\text{a}e1$  e5



Now Hansen again toys with the c4-c5 plan, this time providing the thought-provoking line 17 c5! f4 18 exf4 exf4 19  $\text{f}2$  dxc5 20  $\text{a}4$   $\text{f}7$  21  $\text{b}5$  'with a complicated struggle ahead' (note here that 20  $\text{e}7$ ! runs into 20... $\text{c}3$ ! 21  $\text{e}6$   $\text{g}4$  and ...f4-f3 might prove uncomfortable for White). This active choice does seem considerably stronger than what happened in the game (see below), and the struggle, in fact, appears more problematic for Black. For example after 21... $\text{f}d8$  22  $\text{h}4$   $\text{f}6$  23 dxc5  $\text{h}5$ ? 24  $\text{c}6$  gxf6 (24... $\text{c}5$ + 25  $\text{d}4$ ) 25 c6  $\text{c}8$  26  $\text{c}4$  is great for White, while

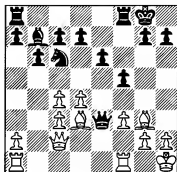
23...a6 24  $\text{c}2$   $\text{h}5$  25  $\text{c}6$  gxf6 26 cxb6  $\text{c}5$ + 27  $\text{h}1$  cxb6 28  $\text{c}4$   $\text{c}3$  is easier for White in view of Black's weakened kingside. 21... $\text{f}6$  avoids this but 22 dxc5 accentuates White's control over the dark squares.

Anyway, Riazantsev-Lukianenko, Moscow 1997 saw Black allowed to generate pressure on the kingside: 17  $\text{b}5$   $\text{a}d8$  18 e4 f4 19  $\text{f}2$   $\text{f}6$  20  $\text{c}1$   $\text{h}6$  21 h3 and White's passivity deservedly met with a breakthrough sacrifice on h3 that soon led to him losing the game.

With the text Black simply develops a piece without 'wasting' a tempo, for the moment holding back the centre pawns.

### 13 e4

Natural but not best. The club player's choice, perhaps (and no doubt a candidate for masters, too), but here White cannot make anything of his space advantage. Indeed, with three pawns abreast rather than two, White's centre will offer Black a bigger target. Again I like Hansen's preference for relocating the bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal: 13  $\text{e}1$   $\text{g}5$  14  $\text{g}3$ , something White can get away with because Black needs to be careful after 14... $\text{c}3$ + 15  $\text{h}1$

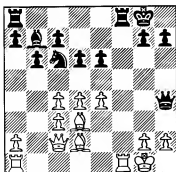


Now 15...f4?? saves the c7-pawn but embarrasses Black after 16  $\text{f}2$  in view of the second diagonal the f4-pawn closes, while 15...d6 16 f4! also sees the escape route blocked, the threat to trap the queen forcing 16... $\text{d}4$  17 cxd4  $\text{c}4$ , when the extra



bishop outweighs the three pawns. Consequently 14...d6 leaves Black susceptible to a timely c4-c5 (once the e3-pawn has been protected). Of course an acquaintance of the queen trap theme is useful here (or a devious mind), which explains why 13 e4 might be seen more often at amateur level.

13...fxe4 14 fxe4 d6



A patient alternative to the previously played 14...e5 15 d5 ♘c7 16 c5, Ovetchkin's move retains Black's options in terms of how the centre might be later addressed. Now 15 c5 can be met with 15...dxc5 16 dxc5 ♘e5, when the e5-square is put to good use, while pushing with 15 d5 would be positionally suspect here because it both surrenders the e5-square and effectively fixes the c4-pawn (and in turn the c3-pawn). Another advantage of holding back the e-pawn is the potential for what might be an unexpected challenge on the light squares with ...d6-d5.

15 ♖e3 ♞xf1+ 16 ♞xf1 ♞f8

Black puts his faith in his superior pawn structure.

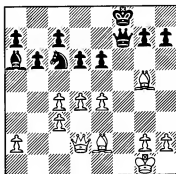
17 ♞xf8+ ♜xf8 18 ♞d2 ♖a6

Time to remind White about the doubled c-pawns.

19 ♖g5 ♞h5 20 ♖e2 ♞f7

An important position from a structural point of view, and no doubt one that Black had in mind when playing ...♘c6. Black's compact set-up offers the bishop pair next to nothing to aim at, whereas the planned ...c6-

e5 will strike at White's broad but ultimately vulnerable centre and put pressure on the c4-pawn. With this in mind White seeks to give the front c-pawn a positive role.



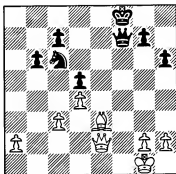
21 c5 ♖xe2 22 ♞xe2 h6 23 ♖e3 d5

Black heads for a traditional 'good' knight versus 'bad' bishop scenario. As I mentioned earlier, this ...d6-d5 possibility looks like an option worth retaining.

24 cxb6 axb6 25 exd5

25 e5 further restricts the scope of the bishop and, to some extent, the queen. Both sides have a queen, of course, but with the bishop it is in White's interests to keep the game as open as possible. Closing lines accentuates the power of the queen and knight combo.

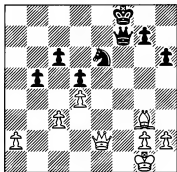
25...exd5



Let us take stock of the situation in the diagram position. White has three pawn is-

lands to Black's two, his problems being the three potential liabilities on the queenside, as opposed to Black's, which can at least be placed on light squares, permanently out of sight of the bishop, making a trade of queens particularly favourable to Black. With this latter point in mind, 26 ♖f2, for example, would serve only to compound White's problem. The squares c4 and (especially) e4 would make ideal outposts for the knight. All the advantages are with Black, and while the reduced forces make the exploitation of White's weaknesses far from easy, Black's chances are nevertheless promising when we consider the practical implications of White's defensive task – a factor that becomes increasingly relevant as the game progresses. Incidentally, we might have reached the 25th move, and already find ourselves in the end-game phase, but the current position is quite typical of this variation. White has a backward c3-pawn, the two bishops never got going and the subsequent trade of light-squared bishops has resulted in an unenviable (for White) allocation of forces.

26 ♖g4 ♖d8 27 ♖f2 ♖e6 28 ♖g3 b5 29 ♖e2 c6



Black does have a backward pawn here, but as long as it can be properly maintained this cluster compares favourably with White's queenside. For the rest of the game White attempts to use his queen and bishop to prevent a decisive incursion of the knight. I'm

sure the clock had a part to play if Black's calm and unhurried approach is anything to go by, although with permanent targets to aim at it is often a useful psychological ploy to allow the pressure on the opponent to mount through the use of 'half' threats.

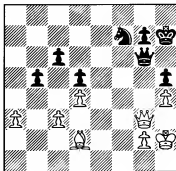
30 ♖e5 ♖g8 31 ♖d6 ♖e8 32 ♖e5 ♖h7 33 h4

Ruling out ...♖g5, but inviting Black to fix another pawn on a dark square.

33...h5 34 ♖h2 ♖g6 35 ♖g3 ♖f7 36 ♖e5 ♖g8 37 ♖f5 ♖f7 38 ♖d3

Unfortunately for White the layout of the pawns means that an exchange of queens is out of the question as the knight would have easy access to points from where the numerous weaknesses can be attacked.

38...♖f6 39 ♖e3 ♖f5 40 ♖e5 ♖g4 41 ♖g3 ♖f5 42 ♖e5 ♖h7 43 ♖g3 ♖g6! 44 ♖f3 ♖d8! 45 ♖f4 ♖f7 46 a3 ♖f5 47 ♖g3 ♖e4 48 ♖d2?! ♖g6!



Offering a desirable trade of queens while simultaneously supporting the knight's next.

49 ♖g5

49 ♖c7 ♖d6+ would be the beginning of the end, although the coming improvement of the knight is what Black has been waiting for.

49...♖d6 50 ♖f3 ♖e4 51 ♖g1?

Not an oversight, rather a decision, albeit unsuccessful, to take his chances in a very poor queen and pawn ending.

51...♖xg5 52 hxg5 ♖xg5 53 ♖h2 ♖h6

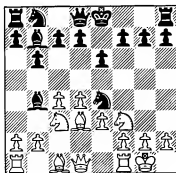
54 ♖h3 ♕g6 55 ♖h2 ♜h4+ 56 ♕g1 ♜f6  
57 ♜g3+ ♖h6 58 ♜e3+ g5 59 g3 ♕g7  
60 ♜e8 ♜d6 0-1

With best play the result is inevitable, and I guess Black's FIDE rating (2535) helped induce White's resignation.

*Game 5*  
**Sadler-Ward**

*Hastings Premier 1997/98*

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♖b4 4 e3 b6 5  
♖d3 ♖b7 6 ♖f3 ♖e4 7 0-0



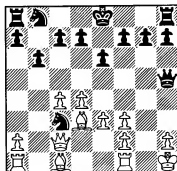
By virtue of breaking the pin, castling also 'attacks' the knight, but this time Black can win a pawn by taking on c3. Consequently, if you're facing the diagram position from Black's side of the board, it is likely that your opponent has a decent idea of what is happening here.

**7...f5**

Not tempted, Black simply gets on with the Dutch theme. Let us look at both captures on c3. 7...♖xc3 8 bxc3 ♖xc3 gains a pawn but loses considerable time after 9 ♜b1 ♖c6 10 ♜b3 ♖a5 11 e4, when Balashov-Romanishin, Lvov Zonal 1978 went 11...h6 12 d5 ♖e7 13 ♖b2 with excellent compensation for the pawn in the form of an advanced, cramping centre, sizeable space advantage and menacing pieces. Black can turn down the pawn with 8...♖e7 but this then makes the initial capture on c3 completely

pointless, e.g. 9 e4 d6 10 ♖e3 0-0 11 ♖d2 e5 12 f4 with the makings of a dangerous initiative for White in Ehlvest-Chiburdanidze, Kalev 1997.

7...♖xc3 makes more sense, with a choice for Black after 8 bxc3. 8...♖xc3 leads to a position that most of us would consider when seeing 7 0-0 for the first time after 9 ♜c2 ♖xf3 10 gxf3 ♜g5+ 11 ♖h1 ♜h5



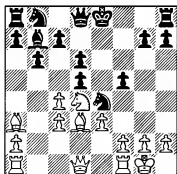
Obviously this means that Black must be prepared for an early draw in the event of 12 ♜xc3 ♜xf3+ 13 ♖g1 ♜g4+ 14 ♖h1 ♜f3+ etc. If White is not satisfied with this then 12 ♜g1! is the way to go, and after 12...♜xf3+ 13 ♜g2 Black can further exploit the predicament of White's king to take time out for 13...f5 because 14 ♜xc3 ♜d1+ is another perpetual. Consequently Black has managed to win the time required to extricate his knight. 14 ♖a3 ♖e4 15 ♜f1 ♜g8 16 ♖e2 ♜h3 17 f3 ♖f6 18 d5 ♖f7 19 e4 gave White a clear advantage in Keres-Spassky, Riga Candidates 1965, but 15...♖c6 looks like an improvement, the first point being that 16 ♖e2? is then not an option due to 16...♖xd4!, exploiting the pin on the third rank.

Instead White has tried 14 ♖b2 ♖e4 15 ♜f1, thus allowing White to both evict the queen after 15...♖c6 16 ♖e2 ♜h3 and then open the long diagonal with 17 d5, as in Taimanov-Kluger, Budapest 1961 and Eslon-Grinza, Teeside 1974, for example. Of

course White is currently two pawns down and might not recoup the full investment, but the situation is far from clear.

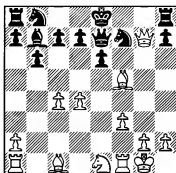
8...f5 transposes to the main game after 9 d5 and to the previous game after 9 ♖c2, while White has three decent alternatives.

9 ♖a3! is a speciality of German IM Schoen and it looks quite promising. The point is to meet 9...d6 with 10 d5 exd5 (10...e5? 11 ♖c2) 11 ♖d4



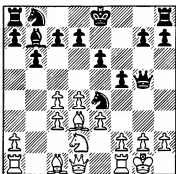
Black would like to play 11...dxc4 12 ♖xc4 d5 but then 13 ♖e6! ♖d7 14 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 16 ♖xc7+ ♖f7 17 ♖xd5 ♖c8 18 ♖fc1 ♖d7 19 ♖e7 kept White on top in Schoen-Tsesarsky, Budapest 1989. 11...c5 12 ♖xf5 0-0 13 cxd5 ♖xf5 14 ♖xe4 ♖c5 15 ♖f3 saw White emerge with a safe extra pawn in Schoen-T. Arnason, Reykjavik 1988. Note here that 13...♖xc3 14 ♖g4 ♖f6 (14...g6 15 ♖b2) 15 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 16 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 17 ♖b2 ♖xd5 18 ♖xc3+ is also very good for White.

With 9 ♖e1 White looks to do without the ♖c2 of the previous game after 9...0-0 10 f3 (see 8...0-0, below) – particularly useful when c2 is the knight's only route back into the game. The possible 'punishment' is in 9...♖xc3, when 10 ♖h5+ g6 11 ♖h6 ♖f6 12 f3 offered White compensation in Bronstein-Dely, Szombathely 1966, while 11...♖e4 12 f3 ♖g5 13 e4 ♖f7 14 ♖g7 ♖e7 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♖xf5! was the challenging course taken in Semkov-Wilder, Saint John 1988.



Now 16...exf5! looks too risky after 17 ♖d3, e.g. 17...♖f8 18 ♖f6 ♖c6 19 ♖e1+ ♖e7 20 ♖h6! (note how the mere presence on the board of the only dark-squared bishop can suddenly have serious implications) 20...♖xh6 21 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 22 ♖xh8+ ♖f8 23 ♖e1+ ♖e4 24 ♖xh7, or 17...♖d8 18 ♖c5 ♖f8 19 ♖e1, when Black is struggling in either case. Instead Black played the calm 16...♖c6 17 ♖c2 0-0-0, restricting White to an edge after 18 ♖a3 ♖g5 19 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 20 ♖d3 ♖a6 21 ♖ad1 etc.

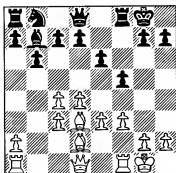
In response to 9 ♖d2 Black has 9...0-0, for which see 8...0-0, below, or the rather blunt 9...♖g5!



This worked out slightly better for White after 10 ♖xe4 fxe4 11 ♖e2 0-0 12 f3 exf3 13 ♖xf3 ♖c6 14 e4 ♖g6 15 ♖a3 d6 16 e5 ♖a5 17 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 18 exd6 cxd6 19 ♖e2 in Zawadski-Levacic, French League 1989, but

the simpler 13...♙xf3 14 ♖xf3 ♜c6 is okay for Black.

8...0-0 will be followed by ...f7-f5 but has the advantage of first sending the king to safety, and avoiding 8...f5 9 ♙a3 might also be a good idea for the second player. 9 ♜d2 contests the e4-square and after 9...f5 10 f3 leads to a position that is also reached via 8...f5 9 ♜d2 0-0 10 f3. Then 10...♙g5 11 ♖e2 d6 12 e4 ♖f6 13 ♙a3 c5 14 ♖ae1 saw White manage to carry on as normal with his knight on d2 (as opposed to e1) in the game Kasparov-Yosifides, Cordoba (simul) 1992. There followed 14 ...♜d7 15 exf5 exf5 16 h4 ♜f7 17 ♖e6 ♖xe6 18 ♖xc6 g6 19 ♖fe1 and White had a pull. Notice the advantage here in White's queen being on e2 rather than c2. Consequently Black might do better simply trading knights after 10 f3: 10...♜xd2 11 ♙xd2



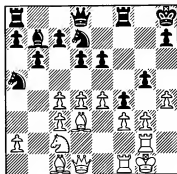
11...♜c6 12 ♖c2 ♙a5?! (12...♖h4) 13 c5 looks nice for White, e.g. 13...bxc5 14 ♖ab1 ♙c6 15 c4 ♜b7 16 d5! exd5 17 cxd5 ♙xd5 18 ♙xf5 h6 19 e4 ♜d6 20 ♙h3, Voiculescu-Fahnenschmidt, European Team Ch., Hamburg 1965, or 13...d6 14 cxd6 ♖xd6 15 c4 c5 16 d5! (again) 16...exd5 17 cxd5 ♙xd5 18 ♙xa5 bxa5 19 ♙xf5 g6 20 ♙d3, Navarovszky-Zak, Budapest 1993.

11...d6 did not put White off c4-c5 (and why should it?) in Gausel-Lauvas, Gausdal 1990: 12 e4 fxe4 13 fxe4 ♖xf1+ 14 ♖xf1 ♜d7 15 ♖f3 ♖e7 16 ♖h3 c5 17 c5 and

White was prepared to invest a pawn to open lines for his forces. With this in mind 15...♖h4!? is less compromising. Then after 16 g3 ♖e7 White cannot so conveniently activate his queen (and f3 might prove a problem later in the game).

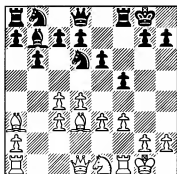
The most appropriate reply to 9 ♜e1 is the immediate 9...f5 as Gligoric-Rodriguez, Havana 1969 gave White the opportunity to meet the push of the f-pawn on his own terms: 9...♖h4! 10 f3 ♙g5 11 e4 f5 12 exf5 exf5 13 ♜c2 f4 14 d5! ♙a6 15 ♜d4 ♜c5 16 ♙c2 ♙a6 17 ♜f5 etc. Black has three possible retreats after (9...f5) 10 f3:

10...♜f6 is the sensible looking option. Then White has tried a number of ways to use the 'extra' move afforded him by leaving out ♖c2. 11 ♜c2 is logical, given the availability of the square, while ♖e2 (leaving c2 free) to support e3-e4 is another possibility. 11 ♖b1! d6 12 ♖b2 ♜c6 13 ♖bf2 might double rooks on a file that is thus far two squares long, but with the central pawn break coming this tidy yet 'coiled spring' set-up is quite feasible. For example Tarjan-Fries Nielsen, Lucerne Olympiad 1982 went 13...♜d7 14 ♜c2 ♙a5 15 e4, when Black's hopes of keeping the game closed with 15...f4 met with the uncompromising 16 g3! g5 (16...fxg3 17 hxg3 gives White an attractive snake of pawns and prospects of adding pressure on the kingside to the space advantage) 17 ♖g2 ♙h8 18 h4!



White has anyway succeeded in giving the rook a role on the second rank. If you like this idea of swinging the rook over before bringing the knight to c2, then 11 a4 could also appeal, the idea being to unsettle Black on the queenside (as well as the dark squares) with a4-a5 in some cases.

10...♗d6 invites 11 ♖a3



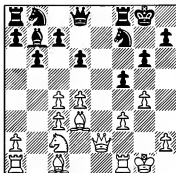
Then 11...♞f6 12 ♗e2 ♗c6 13 ♗c2 e5 14 e4 f4 15 c5 saw Black's expansion in the centre help White's own advance in Wilder-C.Hansen, Dortmund 1988. A later game Semkov-Inkirov, Bulgaria 1989 continued 11...♗c6 12 c5 bxc5 13 ♖xc5 ♗c7 14 ♞b1 ♖c6 15 c4 a5 16 ♗c1 ♗f7 17 e4 with a clear advantage to White.

A little on the provocative side is 10...♗g5. After 11 ♗e2 ♗f6 12 ♖a3 d6 13 ♗c2 White had an edge in Antoshin-Cseshkovsky, USSR Ch 1967. In Lukacs-Cao Sang, Budapest 1997, White took the bait and was too ambitious on the kingside: 11...d6 12 e4 g6 13 ♗c2 ♗f7 14 exf5 exf5 15 g4?

*see following diagram*

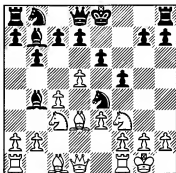
White creates serious weaknesses on the light squares. Something along the lines of a2-a4-a5, or connecting the rooks with ♖f4, looking for c4-c5 and so on would be preferable. I'm sure GM Lukacs could have put up more of a fight but the rest of the game is nonetheless a good illustration of the long-

term implications of vulnerable squares. 15...fxg4 16 fxg4 ♗d7 17 ♖f4 ♗h4 18 ♞ae1 ♗h3 19 ♞f2 ♗f6 20 ♗e3 ♞ae8.



Note how White has failed to make anything of his potential on the dark squares, rather he has – through over-confidence – allowed his opponent inroads on the 'wrong' colour complex. 21 ♗f1 ♗xf1+ 22 ♞xf1 ♗e4 23 ♖xe4 ♞xe4 24 ♗d5? ♖xd5 25 cxd5 ♗g5! 26 ♞xe4 ♗xe4 27 c4 ♗c3 28 ♗g2 b5. Another strike on the light squares. 29 ♖d2 ♞xf1 30 ♗xf1 ♗e4 31 ♖a5 bxc4 32 ♗e2 ♗f7 33 ♖xc7 ♗e7 34 h3 ♗c3+ 35 ♗d2 ♗xd5 36 ♖a5 ♗e6 37 h4 h5 38 gxh5 gxh5 39 ♗e2 ♗f5 40 ♗f3 a6 41 ♖e1 c3 0-1.

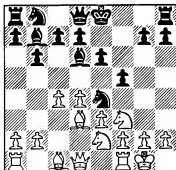
**8 d5**



This is what White should be planning when opting for 7 0-0 over 7 ♗e2. Obviously it is structurally rather committal, but White has a (modest) development lead and a

space advantage, Black's mini pawn chain is a target, Black's control over e4 is reduced and White should benefit more from opening the position.

8  $\text{Qe2}$  takes White's eye off e4 for the moment, although the plan tends to be to transfer the knight to g3 to shore up the kingside. Now the bishop is without a role on b4, and an interesting response is to relocate immediately with 8... $\text{Rd6!}$ ?

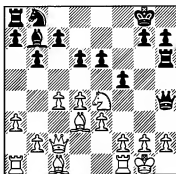


Then 9 b3 0-0 10  $\text{Rb2}$  c5! 11 dxc5 bxc5 12  $\text{Qg3}$   $\text{Rg3}$  13 hxg3 d6 was even in Malaniuk-Ikonnikov, Werfen 1996. 9  $\text{Qe1}$   $\text{Wh4}$  10 g3  $\text{Qg5}$  11 f3  $\text{Qh3+}$  12  $\text{Qg2}$   $\text{Wh5}$  voluntarily put White in an awkward defensive position in Beckhuis-Ikonnikov, Berlin 1996. White tried to break out with 13 e4 0-0 14  $\text{Qc3}$  but 14...f4 15 g4  $\text{Wh4}$  16  $\text{Qc2}$   $\text{Qg5}$  17  $\text{We2}$  h5 was interesting only for Black (whose bishops went to h3 and h4!).

8  $\text{Qe5}$  is far more promising. Then 8...0-0 9  $\text{Qxe4}$  fxe4 10  $\text{Rd2}$   $\text{Rd6}$  11 f4 exf3 12  $\text{Rxf3}$   $\text{Rxf3}$  13  $\text{Qxf3}$   $\text{Qc6}$  14 e4 looks preferable to 10  $\text{Rc2}$   $\text{Wg5}$  11 f4 exf3 12  $\text{Qxf3}$   $\text{Rxf3}$  13  $\text{Rxf3}$   $\text{Rxf3}$  14  $\text{Wxf3}$   $\text{Qc6}$ , which is given as equal in NCO but might be very slightly better for White.

With 8... $\text{Qf6}$  Black rules out coming off worse after a trade on e4. Helbig-Handke, Andorra la Vella 2002 continued 9  $\text{Wc2}$  0-0 10 a3?! (10  $\text{Rd2}$ , e.g. 10...c5 11 a3  $\text{Rxc3}$  12  $\text{Rxc3}$  d6 13  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qd4}$ ) 10... $\text{Rxc3}$  11  $\text{Wxc3}$  d6 12  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qe4}$  13  $\text{Wc2}$   $\text{Rf6}$  14  $\text{Qd2}$   $\text{Rh6}$  15

$\text{Qxc4}$   $\text{Wh4}$



16 h3 fxe4 17  $\text{Rd2}$   $\text{Qd7}$  18 b4 (18  $\text{Rd2}$ ) 18... $\text{Rf8}$  19  $\text{Rg4}$   $\text{Rg6}$  20 d5  $\text{Rg4!}$  21 hxg4  $\text{Qe5}$  22 f3 exf3 23 e4  $\text{Wg3}$  24  $\text{Wf2}$   $\text{Wxg4}$  25  $\text{Rc3}$   $\text{Qxc4}$  26  $\text{Rae1}$  cxd5 27 exd5  $\text{Qe5}$  28  $\text{Rd1}$   $\text{Ra6}$  29  $\text{Rd4}$   $\text{Wg6}$  0-1.

8  $\text{Rxc4?}$  is not a good idea for White: 8...fxe4 9  $\text{Qd2}$   $\text{Rxc3}$  10 bxc3 0-0 11  $\text{Wg4}$   $\text{Rf5!}$ , when Gligoric-Larsen, Havana 1967 went 12 d5  $\text{Rg5}$  13  $\text{Wf4}$  exd5 14 cxd5  $\text{Rxd5}$  15 c4  $\text{Rc6}$  16  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Rg6}$  and Black was doing fine.

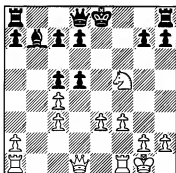
### 8... $\text{Rxc3}$

Because d4-d5 surrenders the c5-square Black tends to keep both knights in order to make maximum use of the hole. However, 8... $\text{Qxc3}$  is playable, although it is easy to be put off by White's space and development lead after 9 bxc3  $\text{Rxc3}$  10  $\text{Rb1}$ , with e3-e4 to follow.

### 9 bxc3 $\text{Qc5}$

Establishing an immediate occupation of c5 and avoiding any pitfalls that might follow  $\text{Rxc4}$ . If this latter factor does not worry Black, then 9... $\text{Ra6}$  comes to mind. NCO then offers 10  $\text{Rxe4}$  fxe4 11  $\text{Qd2}$  exd5 12  $\text{Wh5+}$  g6 13  $\text{We5+}$   $\text{Qf7}$  14 cxd5 with a clear advantage to White, but 11... $\text{Wh4!}$ ? looks interesting, e.g. 12 g3  $\text{Wg5}$  13  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{We5}$  14  $\text{Wd4}$   $\text{Wxd4}$  15 cxd4 exd5 16 cxd5  $\text{Rxd5}$  when only Black can claim a slight edge, or 12 dxe6 0-0-0! 13 exd7+  $\text{Rxd7}$  and Black must have a pawn's worth of compensation.

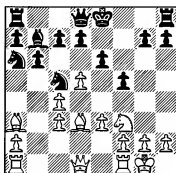
I like 10 ♖a3, when 10...♕ec5 transposes to the main game and 10...♕ac5 is what we would expect after 9...♕a6. 11 ♖xe4 fxe4 12 ♕d2 seems awkward for Black, while after 11...♕xe4 Hansen gives a 1993 correspondence game, Scholl-Engel, which was agreed drawn after 12 ♕d4 exd5 13 f3 ♕c5 14 cxd5 ♖a6 in a situation that still (obviously) has much to offer. However, White might well have an improvement in 14 ♖xc5 bxc5 15 ♕xf5



Now active defence with 15...♖f6 gives White a pleasant choice after 16 ♖b1 ♖b8. Sacrificing the exchange is tempting: 17 ♖xb7? ♖xb7 18 ♖xd5 and now, for example, 18...♖b8 19 ♖d1 ♖d8 (19...d6? 20 ♖c6+) 20 ♖xc5 favours White, while 18...♖b6 19 ♖xc5 g6 20 ♕d4 ♖d6 is unclear. Less speculative and probably stronger is 17 ♖a4, e.g. 17...a6 18 ♖a5 ♖xf5 19 ♖xc7 0-0 20 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 21 ♖xb7 dxc4 22 ♖d1 and Black's weak pawns number more than White's. 15...0-0 also needs to be investigated: 16 ♖b1 ♖xf5 (16...♖b8?! 17 ♖xb7 ♖xf5 18 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 19 ♖d3) 17 ♖d3! ♖f7 18 ♖xb7 dxc4 19 ♖xc4 d6 20 ♖fb1 puts Black under considerable pressure.

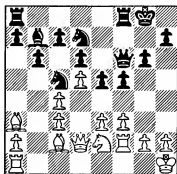
9...0-0 10 ♖a3 helps White, and 9...exd5?! 10 cxd5 opens the game in White's favour, e.g. 10...♕xc3 11 ♖c2 ♕xd5 12 ♖xf5 ♕b4 13 ♖b1, or 10...♖xd5 11 c4 ♖b7 12 ♕d4 etc.

**10 ♖a3 ♕ba6**



**11 ♖e1**

When the game moves into a new phase with the opening of the centre after e3-c4, White wants his rook primed for action. Another plan is to send the knight over to b3 in order to challenge Black's hold on c5. 11 ♖c2 rules out ...♕xd3 while planning to use the long-range piece should White manage to successfully engineer e3-e4. Then 11...♖f6 was tried in G.Buckley-Ward, British Ch., Torquay 1998. It is worth taking the time to see how White's insistence on generating a kingside attack led to the disintegration of his centre. There followed 12 ♕d4 0-0 13 f3 g6 14 ♖d2 e5 15 ♖f2. Highlighting another point of ♖c2 – Black's knight has nowhere to run from c5 in the event of ...e5xd4 and a subsequent recapture by a pawn. 15...d6 16 ♕c2 ♕d7 17 ♖h1 ♕ac5



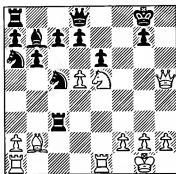
Black's tidy rearrangement has resulted in



a very nice set-up for both pieces and pawns. The same cannot be said for White, whose queenside illustrates very the positional risks involved for the first player when – not content with the positions that follow 7 ♖c2 – he burns his bridges with the committal strategy around which this main game features. White now elects to justify ♔c2 by preparing what would seem to be a thematic thrust of the g-pawn. 18 ♖g1 ♔a6 19 g4 (19 ♔b3) 19...f4 20 g5 ♖f7 21 ♔xc5 ♕xc5 22 exf4 ♔xc4 23 f5. White gets his complications, but at what cost? 23...♖xd5 24 ♖e3 gxf5 25 ♖fg2 (25 g6 f4) 25...f4 26 ♖f2 ♕d3 27 ♖h4 ♖xf3 28 ♕c1 ♕f2+ 29 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 30 ♖xf2 ♔d5+ 31 ♖gg2 ♖g7 32 c4 ♔xc4! and Black had an armada of passed pawns to set sail for the new world.

**11...♖f6**

An improvement over 11...0-0, when Rechlis-Brunner, Bern 1990 went 12 e4 fxe4 13 ♔xe4 ♖f4 14 ♔c2 ♔xc4? 15 ♕e5 ♖xc3 16 ♔xh7+ ♖xh7 17 ♖h5+ ♖g8 18 ♔b2



Black's king has been abandoned. Countless books will warn you not to be tempted into chasing after pawns in this fashion, and for good reason. Now 18...♕a4 19 ♔xc3 ♕xc3 20 ♖f7+ ♖h8 21 ♖e3 is decisive and not too difficult to find, but 18...♖c2 19 ♖f7+ ♖h7 requires a little more effort. For instance 20 ♖e3 ♖h4 21 ♖g3 ♖xg3 22 hxg3 ♖xb2 doesn't bring White the desired result. Correct is 20 ♕g4! ♖xb2 21 ♖e5!, e.g.

21...♖h4 22 ♖h5+ ♖xh5 23 ♕f6+ etc. Instead the game went 18...♖f6 19 ♔xc3 ♔xd5 20 ♕g6 ♖xc3 21 ♕e7+ ♖f8 22 ♕xd5 g6 (22...exd5 23 ♖h8+ ♖f7 24 ♖xa8) 23 ♖xg6 ♖g7 (23...exd5 24 ♖f5+ ♖g8 25 ♖xd5+ ♖h8 26 ♖xa8+) 24 ♕f4 ♖xg6 25 ♕xg6+ ♖g7 26 ♕e5 ♕b4 27 ♖e2 and a new battle commenced, White eventually winning the race for promotion.

With the text Black keeps his options open as far as his king is concerned, and there is also the defence of the c3-pawn for White to consider.

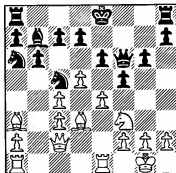
**12 ♖c2**

Psakhis gives 12 ♕d4 e5! 13 ♔c2 (13 ♕xf5 e4) 13...0-0 14 ♕b3 (14 ♕xf5 e4) 14...d6 as equal. Black undoubtedly has a structural supremacy and, with respect to the c5-square, is effectively sitting pretty with nowhere to go. Much patience is required in these situations.

**12...g6**

Psakhis proposes 12...0-0!?, which is supported by Hansen, and it would seem more consistent to follow up ...♖f6 (as opposed to the previously played ...0-0) by taking up this option as quickly as possible. Then after 13 e4 fxe4 14 ♔xe4 ♕xe4 15 ♖xe4 Black can safely get away with 15...♖xc3, and the pinned d-pawn slows White down.

**13 e4!**



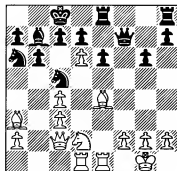
**13...fxe4 14 ♔xe4 0-0-0**

This time Psakhis suggests 14...0-0?, and this does indeed look okay for Black. Note the difference between the game and the situation after 12...0-0-0 in the previous note is that here 14...♕xe4 can be met with 15 ♖xe4, when 15...0-0-0 16 ♖c5 (or 16 ♖c3) allows White to stay active.

**15 ♕d2 ♖de8 16 ♖ad1 ♖f7**

Psakhis suggests keeping White on his toes with 16...♖hf8. The text eyes the d5-pawn and drops the queen out of harm's way so that after ...♕xe4 White does not get a 'free' hit by recapturing with the knight. Unfortunately for Black this in itself takes time, something that Sadler now clinically exploits by chipping away remorselessly at his opponent's defences.

**17 d6!**



Just when Black thought the dark squares were safe...

**17...♕xe4 18 ♕xe4 ♖f5**

18...c5 avoids the following but after 19 ♖c1 White has other dark squares to get to work on, and Black's knight suddenly looks incredibly dim (where will it find a worthwhile role?).

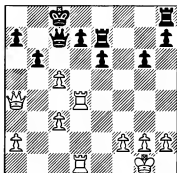
**19 dxc7 ♖xe4 20 ♖xe4**

20 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21 ♖xe4 is comfortably better for White, and then 21...♖xc7 22 ♖ed4 would be very comfortable indeed.

**20...♕c5 21 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 22 ♖ed4 ♖e7 23 ♖a4 ♖xc7 24 c5!**

The weakness becomes a strength, White

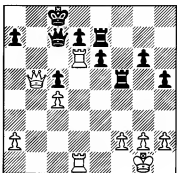
using the front pawn as a mini battering ram to create an inroad to Black's king.



**24...bxc5 25 ♖d6 ♖f8 26 ♖b5 ♖f5 27 c4**

Psakhis suggests 27 ♖a6!?, keeping Black's king in White's sights in view of 27...♕d8 28 ♖xe6. 27...♖b7 leads to an ending that is quite promising for White after 28 ♖xb7+ ♖xb7 29 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 30 ♖xd7+ ♖b6 31 ♖xh7 ♖d5 32 h4 etc. This leaves 27...♖b8 28 ♖b1+ ♖a8 29 ♖db6! ♖d5! 30 ♖b5 c4 31 ♖5b4, and Black has some defending to do.

**27...h5**



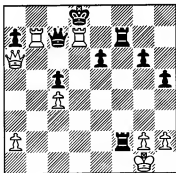
**28 ♖b1**

This time the check on a6 has slightly different implications: 28 ♖a6+ ♖b7 29 ♖xb7+ ♖xb7 30 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 31 ♖xd7+ ♖b6 32 ♖d6+ ♖a5 33 ♖xe6 ♖f4 34 ♖xg6 ♖xc4 is an improvement for Black over the previous ending, while 28...♖b8? should be avoided in

view of 29 ♖b1+ ♔a8 30 ♖db6! ♕e5 31 ♖b8+ ♖xb8 32 ♖xb8+ ♔xb8 33 ♖d6+.  
**28...♔d8! 29 ♖a6 ♕ef7 30 ♖b7**

Perfectly natural, but (temporarily) recalling the troops with 30 f3! ♔e7 31 ♖dd1 might be called for.

**30...♖xf2! 31 ♖xd7+**



Failure to provide a diagram here would be a crime. But the fire soon dies out, and with it White's winning prospects.

**31...♖xd7 32 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 33 ♖xa7+ ♔d6 34 ♖b6+**

Not 34 ♖a6+? ♔e5, when Black's king becomes his third attacking piece.

**34...♔d7 35 ♖b7+ ♔d6 36 ♖b8+ ♔d7 37 ♖b5+ ♔d6 38 ♖b6+ ♔d7 39 ♖b7+ ♔d6 ½-½**

A highly instructive game from start to finish.

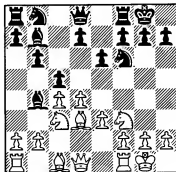
While it is safe to say that reacting to Black's ...f7-f5 policy with the time-saving, slightly provocative 7 0-0 offers White the best chances of generating something positive, it might well come down to taste. With 7 ♖c2 White can be seen to be wasting a move in some circumstances (as well as obstructing the second rank), but c3 is protected and the e3-e4 push already supported. From the Nimzo player's point of view I guess 7 ♖c2 will be met much more often at club level due to the theoretical knowledge – or effort at the board – required to play 7 0-0.

Game 6

Yusupov-Korchnoi

Vienna 1996

**1 d4 ♔f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♔c3 ♖b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♔d3 ♖b7 6 ♔f3 0-0 7 0-0 c5**



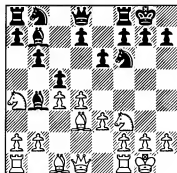
A decent strategic option for Black, whose involvement in the centre tends to concern a trade of the c-pawn for a genuine centre pawn, leaving White with a duo on c4 and d4. Now 8 ♖d2 is seen but after 8...cxd4 (Black also has 8...d6, e.g. 9 a3 ♖xc3 10 ♖xc3 ♔e4 etc.) 9 exd4 d5 10 cxd5 ♔xd5 or 8...d5 9 cxd5 cxd4 10 exd4 ♔xd5 we have an IQP situation where play is similar to the related lines in Part 3, whereas Yusupov's next is specific to this particular line. Note that 9 ♔xd4 is rather negative and relinquishes any hope of making Black work. The thematic e3-e4 will lose a tempo, as will the improvement of the queen's bishop. For example Paglilla-Panno, Argentina 2002, continued 9...♖c8 10 a3 ♖f8 11 e4 d6 12 ♖e1 ♔bd7 13 ♔f3 a6 14 b4 ♖c7 15 h3 ♖ac8 16 ♖c1 ♖b8 17 ♖f4 and Black had already prepared a sound hedgehog set-up.

8 a3 here makes little sense given the positional theme underlining the Nimzo itself. After 8...♖xc3 9 bxc3 Black can steer the game to Sämisch territory with 9...d6, plant his knight on e4 or even put his bishop there: 9...♖e4 10 ♖e2 ♔c6 11 ♔d2 ♖g6 12 f3 d5

13 ♖b3 ♜c8 and Black was fine in Wong Meng Kong-Teplitsky, Bled 2002.

### 8 ♖a4

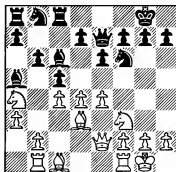
Unless you're already well booked up on the theory or have bags of time, this is the kind of move that requires us to entertain ostensibly unorthodox possibilities just for it to be considered as a candidate. The advice that knights on the rim are dim is worth storing but, like all such rules, does not have to be adhered to so rigidly. In this case, given that White – after 7...c5 – should be looking at the structure after ...♙xc3 and, subsequently, the fixed pawn on c4 should Black insist on maintaining his on c5, we are drawn to simply moving the knight, thus bringing about a new picture in terms of the bishop on b4. With nothing in its sights and little in the way of breathing space, this piece is in danger of becoming stranded in enemy territory. So this is a potentially desirable course for White, but where should the knight go? Unfortunately dropping back to e2 means a recapture on f3 must be made with the g2-pawn, a factor perhaps best exploited by (8 ♖e2) 8...cxd4, when 9 ♖exd4 packs no punch whatsoever but 9 exd4? ♙xf3 10 gx f3 leaves the new f-pawns without a neighbour. 8 ♖b1 is ridiculous, so we are left with the text and, on closer inspection, the knight might anyway have a contribution to make on a4 in some instances.



### 8...cxd4

Not surprisingly the most popular choice, providing the bishop with a route back to base. 8...♞e7 9 a3 ♙a5 can be a bit tricky. Then 10 ♖d2 ♙xd2 11 ♙xd2 ♙e4 should be okay for Black. In Korobov-Pelletier, Istanbul 2003 White soon got to work on the queenside: 12 ♙e2 d6 13 b4 ♖bd7 14 f3 ♙c6 15 ♙c3 ♜fd8 with a balanced game.

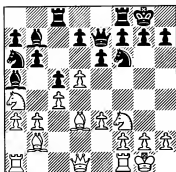
Instead 10 ♜b1 seeks to exert pressure on the wayward bishop by adding weight to the possibility of b2-b4. Lautier-Gelfand, Germany 1996/7 saw considerable action after 10...♞c8 (10...♖e4 11 b3 f5 12 ♞e2 was a shade better for White in Petrosian-Bronstein, Kislovodsk 1982) 11 ♞e2 ♙c6 12 ♙c2 d5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 dxc5 bxc5 15 b4 cxb4 16 ♙d2 b3 etc. More recently, in the game V.Georgiev-Hauchard, Halkidiki 2002 White sought to profit from the location of his opponent's forces by generating an attack on the kingside: 12 e4!?



The knight on a4 has been used as bait, Black's intention to chase it with his bishops justifying positive action elsewhere. Now after 12...♙xa4 13 e5 the knight must accept its fate as self-preservation walks into ♞e4, hitting h7 and a8. Therefore White will succeed in removing an important defender, e.g. 13...♖a6 14 exf6 gxf6 (14...♞xf6?? 15 ♙g5) 15 ♖h4 and with three minor pieces on the a-file and the queen given the role of sole defender to the damaged kingside, Black suddenly sees no less than four white pieces

within striking distance of his king. Consequently Hauchard pushed with 12...d5, when White continued in aggressive fashion: 13 ♖g5 dxc4 14 ♖c2 h6 15 ♖h4 cxd4 16 ♜xd4 ♖xa4 17 ♖xa4 ♜c5 18 ♖xf6 gxf6 19 ♜fd1 a6 20 b4! cxb3 21 ♜xb3 ♖c3 22 ♜g4+ ♜g5 23 ♜xg5!+ hxg5 24 ♜c1 ♜d8 25 ♜bxc3 ♜xd4 26 ♜c8+ and Black was in trouble. Further tests are required, but it is easy to appreciate why the simple 8...cxd4 is the main route taken by Black at all levels.

Nevertheless, Black has also tried refraining from the pawn trade with 8...♖a6, again watching over the b4-square, while also keeping an eye on c5. In Lesiege-I.Sokolov, Elista Olympiad 1998, Black survived only ten more moves, the game ending 9 a3 ♖a5 10 b3 ♜e7 11 ♖b2 ♜ac8 12 d5!

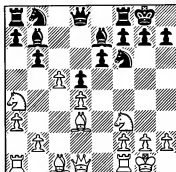


12...exd5 13 cxd5 d6 14 ♖h4 ♜xd5? 15 ♜f5 ♜g5 16 h4 ♜xg2+ 17 ♜xg2 ♜xe3+ 18 ♜h2 ♜xd1 19 ♜axd1 1-0. One improvement is 10...♖e4 in order to follow up with the traditional push of the f-pawn, when neither side seems to be gaining or losing from the queenside piece placement.

**9 exd4**

If White definitely plans to expand with b2-b4 and ♖b2 then he might prefer 9 a3 ♖e7 10 exd4. For example after 10...d6 11 ♜e1 ♖bd7 12 b4 ♜c8 13 ♖b2 ♖f8 we reach the same position as in the main game but this time Black has spent an extra move returning his bishop to f8. 10...d5?! is unappeal-

ing for Black, playing into White's hands by turning the knight into a well placed piece on a4 after 11 c5

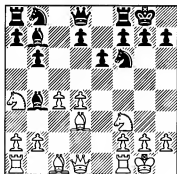


Then 11...♖bd7 12 b4 bxc5 13 ♜xc5 is rather pleasant for White, or 11...bxc5 12 dxc5 (12 ♜xc5 is, again, quite playable) 12...♖bd7 13 b4, when S.Nikolov-Zorko, Bled 2002 saw Black try to get his own pawn majority rolling with 13...e5: 14 ♜c1 e4 15 ♜d4 exd3 16 c6 ♖c8 17 cxd7 ♖xd7 18 ♜c3 ♖d6 19 ♜xd3 ♜c8 and now 20 ♜f3 followed by ♖c3-d4 was excellent for White.

More recently Gonzalez Garcia-L.Galego, Havana 2003 went 10...♜c7. Then both the consistent 11 b4 and the alternative 11 ♖g5 (perhaps with ♜c1 to follow) come to mind, but White reacted to the development of the queen with 11 ♜c3, when there followed 11...d5 12 cxd5 ♜xd5 13 ♖b5 ♜d8 14 ♖e5?! ♜d7 15 ♜h5 g6 16 ♜e2 ♜xe5 17 dxe5 a6 18 ♜d4 ♜f4 19 ♖xf4 ♜xd4 20 ♖c3 ♜xe5 21 ♖xb6 ♜xe2 22 ♖xe2 ♖f6 and White's premature show of aggression had deservedly come to a little less than nothing.

Anyway, returning to 9 a3, apart from the fact that Korchnoi's 9...♖d6 10 exd4 ♖xf3 11 ♜xf3 ♜c6 is a worthy alternative to the automatic retreat to e7, there is a practical downside to hitting the bishop in that White is effectively helping his opponent in the decision making progress. Leaving the bishop on b4 introduces additional possibilities which Black is required to analyse him-

self, while 9 exd4 also keeps White's options open regarding the development of his dark-squared bishop. In an era that has seen time controls quickened up considerably even at the higher levels of international competition, these considerations are particularly relevant.



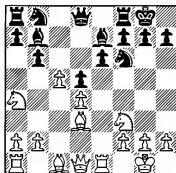
### 9...♞e8

The most appropriate selection, although others have been tried. White is waiting for the 'natural' 9...d5! as this invites 10 c5, threatening to trap the bishop with a2-a3 and b2-b4 etc. After 10...bxc5 I rather like the simple 11 ♖xc5, when the isolated d-pawn is more of a help than a hindrance since it supports the knight (and the dark squares in general) in tandem with the b-pawn once the bishop has been chased away. Meanwhile, ...♙xc5 sees Black in danger of giving too much away on the dark squares, one result being White's easier to handle pawn majority – see Iskusnyh-Ibragimov, Elista 1995, below. The theoretical recommendation is 11 a3, when 11...c4 can be met with 12 axb4 cxd3 13 ♖xd3 ♕e4 14 ♙f4 or 12 ♙xh7+ ♕xh7 13 axb4, with a pleasant game for White in either case in view of the gradual take-over of the dark squares.

9...♞c7 10 h3 ♙e7 11 ♙e3 d6 12 ♕c3 ♞e8 13 ♞c1 is slightly better for White according to NCO. Notice here that Black's bishop heads back to e7 without being asked.

Malaniuk's 9...♙c7 can be met with 10 ♙f4! or the more flexible (but not necessar-

ily stronger) 10 ♞c1. Then 10...d5! – despite the now safe spot on e7 for Black's bishop – again falls short after 11 c5

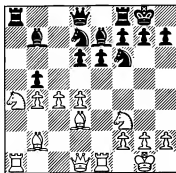


The point is that White's ♕a4 has fit in well with this advance, whereas Black's bishop sortie lost its relevance, and the grip on the centre gives Black little by way of compensation for White's expansion. Iskusnyh-Ibragimov, Elista 1995 continued 11...bxc5 (otherwise White will bolster the c5-pawn with the b-pawn) 12 ♖xc5 ♙xc5 13 dxc5 ♕bd7 14 b4 a5 15 ♕d4 and Black was under pressure. For example 15...♞c8 16 a3, 15...♞c8 16 ♞c2 and 15...e5 16 c6 exd4 17 cxb7 ♞b8 18 ♙a6 ♞b6 19 b5 ♕e4 20 ♙f4 are promising for White. Instead the game went 15...♞c7 16 ♙g5! (16 ♞c2 ♕fe8) 16...e5 (16...axb4 17 c6 ♙xc6 18 ♞c1 ♕b8 19 ♙xf6 gxf6 20 ♙xh7+ ♕xh7 21 ♞h5+ ♕g7 22 ♞g4+ ♕h7 23 ♞e3) 17 ♕b5 ♞b8 18 ♕d6 axb4 19 ♙xf6 ♕xf6 (19...gxf6 20 ♙xh7+ ♕xh7 21 ♞h5+ ♕g8 22 ♞e3) 20 ♙xe5 ♙c6 21 ♙g5 g6 (21...♞d8!) 22 h4 and White switched to the kingside.

Black played White at his own game in Iskusnyh-A.Budnikov, Vladivostok 1995, the c5-square given yet more attention after 10...♕a6!?. White was not given time to support c4-c5 with the b-pawn: 11 a3 d5 12 cxd5 ♕xd5 13 ♕c3 ♕ac7 14 ♕e4 ♕f6 was comfortable for Black. 11 a3 seems like a waste here. Perhaps 11 ♙g5 d5 12 c5 is possible as 12...bxc5 13 ♖xc5 ♕xc5 14 dxc5 allows

White to 'keep' the pawn on c5 in view of 14...♙xc5 15 ♙xh7+ ♚xh7 16 ♜c2+ ♚g8 17 ♜xc5 with an edge for White.

Best is 10...d6 when the principled response to 11 b4 is 11...a5, e.g. 12 a3 ♖bd7 13 ♙b2 axb4 14 axb4 ♞e8 15 ♖c3 ♞xa1 16 ♙xa1 ♙f8 17 ♙f1 ♞a8 18 ♖d2 g6 19 ♙b2 ♖h5 which was perhaps a shade preferable for White in Schoen-Weih, Bundesliga 1986/7. However, Hansen's reference to Lein-de Firmian, USA Ch. 1986 seems like a good choice: Black judged that it was worth a modest investment to take the sting out of the wall of pawns: 14...b5!?



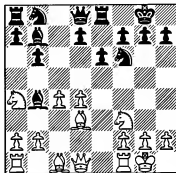
15 cxb5 ♖b6 16 ♖d2 ♖fd5 17 ♜b3 ♖xa4 18 ♞xa4 ♜b6 19 ♞ea1 ♞xa4 20 ♞xa4 ♖f4 21 ♙f1 ♙f6 and Black must have been (justifiably) content.

Ignoring the b4-pawn with 11...♖bd7 simply permits White to save time on other lines – most notably 9 a3. Malaniuk-Tiviakov, Porto San Giorgio 1994, for instance, went 12 ♙b2 ♞c8? 13 ♖c3 ♞e8 14 ♙f1 ♜c7 15 h3 (15 ♖d2!? – Malaniuk) 15...♜b8 16 ♞e3 ♙f8 17 d5! and White was making progress. 11 ♙f4 and ♖c3 is another, perfectly viable mode of development.

Let us return to the position after 9...♞e8.

Anticipating the arrival of his bishop back into the fold, Black prepares to adopt the traditional hedgehog 'development' that sees the bishop slot in on f8. The next phase of the game is determined by White's choice of

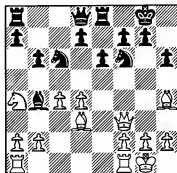
deployment for the dark-squared bishop.



### 10 a3

Preparing to stake a claim to the queenside by pushing the b-pawn, after which the bishop is usually posted on the a1-h8 diagonal. Of course the bishop can be brought into the game directly. Gulko-Matanovic, Biel Interzonal 1976, went 10 ♙f4 ♙f8 11 ♞c1 d6 12 ♞e1 ♖bd7 13 ♖c3 a6 14 a3 h6 with a balanced game. In fact Black was waiting for White to carry out his plan, and after 15 b4 a5 16 ♙b1 axb4 17 axb4 reacted to his opponent's flank play with the traditional counter in the centre, namely 17...e5.

I prefer 10 ♙g5, pinning the knight and being a little more active. Then 10...♙e7 11 ♞c1 d6 12 ♞e1 ♖bd7 13 ♖c3 is typical, while a more interesting course for Black is the variation 10...h6 11 ♙h4 ♙xf3 12 ♜xf3 ♖c6



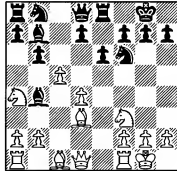
White seems to have two choices here.

With his only knight out on a4 it would be natural to put our faith in the bishop pair with Kotov's 13 ♖c3!, with an unclear game according to the GM. Hansen believes Black is okay after 13...d5, but 14 c5 appears yet again to be an effective answer to the push of the d-pawn. Black would like to play 14...e5 but 15 ♔b5 is very good for White in view of 15...exd4? 16 ♖b3 or 15...♗d4 16 ♔xe8 ♖xe8 17 ♔xf6 gxf6 18 ♗c3, with a decisive or clear advantage respectively. 14...bxc5 15 dxc5 e5? is another try, running into 16 a3 ♔a5 17 ♔b5!, when the desired 17...♗c8 loses to 18 b4 and 17...♗d7 drops the h6-pawn after 18 ♔xf6 etc. Meanwhile 17...♞e6 18 ♔xc6 ♞xc6 19 ♖xe5 also loses a pawn. Perhaps (14...bxc5 15 dxc5) 15...♔a5 is the sensible approach in view of White's easy plan to further support c5, but a slight disadvantage is the best Black can claim in this position.

Another option is to inflict structural damage on Black with 13 ♔xf6 ♖xf6 14 ♖xf6 gxf6, e.g. 15 d5 ♗e5 16 ♔c2 ♞ac8 17 a3 ♔f8 18 ♞ac1 ♗g6, when V.Georgiev-Mikhachishin, Bled 2002 produced a patient endgame display from the talented young Bulgarian: 19 dxe6 dxe6 20 ♞f1 ♞e8 21 ♞xd8 ♞xd8 22 ♖f1 f5 23 g3 ♗e5 24 b4 ♗c6 25 c5 bxc5 26 bxc5 ♞b8 27 ♞d1 ♞b3 28 ♞d3 ♞xd3 29 ♔xd3 and White's winning chances were kept alive by his passed pawn and by Black's difficulty in creating one of his own. By now, I admit, we have been on quite a journey, but I'd like to give the rest of the game as it is a good illustration of the defensive problems encountered by the side with an inferior structure in such (common) situations. Anyway, we have only reached the 30th move and the layout of the pawns is important... 29...♗d4 30 ♖e1 ♔e7 31 ♔c4 ♖f8 32 ♖d2 ♗c6 33 ♔e2 ♖e8 34 ♖c3 ♖d7 35 ♖c4 ♖c7 36 ♔h5 a6 37 f4 ♗a5+ 38 ♖b4 ♗b7 39 ♖c4 ♗a5+ 40 ♖c3 ♗b7 41 ♖d4 ♗d8 42 h3 ♗c6+ 43 ♖c4 ♗a5+ 44 ♖c3 ♗b7 45 ♖d4 ♗d8 46 ♖c4 ♖c6 47 ♔f3+

♖c7 48 ♗b2 ♗c6 49 ♗d3 ♔f6 50 ♔xc6 ♖xc6 51 ♗e5+ ♔xe5 52 fxe5 ♖d7 53 ♖b4 ♖c6 54 a4 h5 55 h4 ♖d5 56 ♖a5 ♖xc5 57 ♖xa6 ♖c6 58 a5 ♖c7 59 ♖b5 ♖b7 60 a6+ ♖a7 61 ♖c4.

Finally we cannot ignore the ambitious thrust 10 c5!:

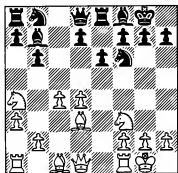


This advance seeks to close the a3-f8 diagonal and therefore introduces the not too subtle threat of trapping the bishop. Unfortunately for White there are a couple of ways in which Black can earn a pleasant game. After 10...bxc5 11 a3 c4 12 ♔xh7+ ♗xh7 13 axb4 the situation is quite different from what we saw after 9...d5! 10 c5 in the note to Black's ninth move because here Black has 13...♔xf3! 14 ♖xf3 ♗c6, as in Ree-Langeweg, Dutch Championship 1983. In fact the presence of Black's pawn on d7 – rather than d5 – is quite significant, for there is also the immediate possibility of 10...♔xf3! 11 ♖xf3 ♗c6, e.g. 12 ♔e3 e5 13 dxe5 ♗xe5 14 ♗d1 ♗fg4, and here Black was sufficiently confident to go on the offensive in the game Ogaard-Adorjan, Gjovik 1983.

#### 10...♔f8

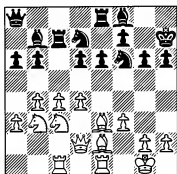
The alternative retreat 10...♔e7! is hardly a blunder, but since the bishop usually finds itself on the f8-square at some point anyway, it makes sense to relocate it there immediately.





## 11 b4!?

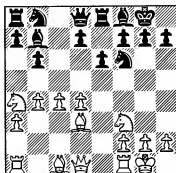
11  $\text{♟g5!}$ ? is perhaps more interesting than on the tenth move because Black's bishop is already committed to f8 (every silver lining has a cloud...). Then 11...d6 12  $\text{♞c3}$   $\text{♜e7}$  13  $\text{♞e1}$   $\text{♞bd7}$  14  $\text{♞e2}$  h6 15  $\text{♟h4}$   $\text{♞h5}$  16  $\text{♟xe7}$   $\text{♞xe7}$  17  $\text{♞e3}$  a6 18 b4  $\text{♞ac8}$  19  $\text{♞d2}$  gave White a slight pull in Kharitonov-Chernin, USSR Championship 1984. More recently White tried 12 b4 in Graf-Reeh, Cologne 2003. There followed 12... $\text{♞bd7}$  13  $\text{♞e1}$  h6 14  $\text{♟f4}$   $\text{♞c8}$  15  $\text{♞c1}$  a6 16  $\text{♞c3}$   $\text{♞h5}$  17  $\text{♟e3}$   $\text{♞hf6}$  18  $\text{♞d2}$  g6 19  $\text{♟e2}$   $\text{♞c7}$  20  $\text{♞b3}$   $\text{♞a8}$  21 f3  $\text{♟h7}$  22  $\text{♞d2}$



White has the usual healthy looking territorial superiority and the long-term psychological advantage this brings – against a patient opponent, Black cannot afford to sit and wait until he is overrun. However, this means appreciating the ‘coiled spring’ charac-

ter of hedgehog systems and, ironically, having an equal measure of patience in that Black should be ready to pounce in the event of over-ambitious or inaccurate play. In fact Black struck first: 22...e5? 23 dxe5 dxe5 24  $\text{♞a4!}$   $\text{♞e6}$  25 c5 b5 26  $\text{♞c3}$   $\text{♞d5}$  27  $\text{♞a5}$   $\text{♞xc3}$  28  $\text{♞xc3}$   $\text{♞xc5}$  29  $\text{♞ed1!}$   $\text{♞c7}$  30  $\text{♞xb5}$   $\text{♞xc1}$  31  $\text{♞xc1}$   $\text{♞f6}$  32  $\text{♞c7}$   $\text{♞a7+}$  33  $\text{♟h1}$   $\text{♞d6}$  34  $\text{♞xd6}$   $\text{♟xd6}$  35  $\text{♞xb7}$   $\text{♞xb7}$  36  $\text{♞xa6}$  and White was firmly in charge. Incidentally ECO recommends 11...h6 12  $\text{♟h4}$   $\text{♟xf3}$  13  $\text{♞xf3}$   $\text{♞c6}$ , but then 14  $\text{♟xf6}$   $\text{♞xf6}$  15  $\text{♞xf6}$  gxf6 16 d5 is almost identical to V.Georgiev-Mikhailchishin in the note (10  $\text{♟g5}$ ) to White's 10th move – although this was only slightly favourable for White from a theoretical point of view.

11  $\text{♞e1}$  d6 12  $\text{♞c3}$   $\text{♞bd7}$  13 d5 e5 14  $\text{♟f1}$  g6 15 b4  $\text{♞h5}$  16  $\text{♞b3}$  was seen in Azmaiparashvili-Lerner, Kuibyshev 1986. Now Black could consider 16...h6 followed by ...f7-f5, but after 16... $\text{♞g7}$  17  $\text{♟e3}$   $\text{♞f5}$  18  $\text{♟d2}$   $\text{♟c7}$  19  $\text{♞e4}$   $\text{♞f6}$  20 a4 White was on the way to being the first to generate activity. Instead Azmaiparashvili's 11... $\text{♟xf3}$ ! 12  $\text{♞xf3}$   $\text{♞c6}$  13  $\text{♟e3}$  e5 14 dxe5  $\text{♞xe5}$  15  $\text{♞d1}$  d5! is equal – assuming that White now takes on d5 rather than 16 c5? d4! 17  $\text{♟xd4?}$   $\text{♞xd3}$  18  $\text{♞xe8}$   $\text{♞xe8}$  19  $\text{♞xd3}$  bxc5 etc.

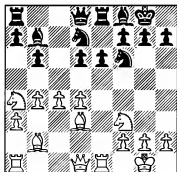


## 11...d6

This time 11... $\text{♟xf3}$  12  $\text{♞xf3}$   $\text{♞c6}$  can be met with 13  $\text{♟b2}$ , when 13...e5 14 dxe5  $\text{♞xe5}$  15  $\text{♟xe5}$   $\text{♞xe5}$  16  $\text{♞ae1}$   $\text{♞e1}$  17  $\text{♞xe1}$

favours White in view of his more active pieces (light squares) and the isolated pawn. Alternatively, 14 d5 could be even better, for example 14...e4 15 ♖xf6 exf3 16 ♖xd8 fxg2 17 ♜fc1 ♜xc1+ 18 ♜xc1 ♖xd8, with a difficult time ahead for Black.

12 ♜e1 ♖bd7 13 ♖b2

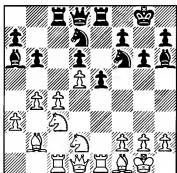


13...♖c8

13...a5 14 b5 ♖c8 15 ♜c1 ♜c7 16 ♖b1 ♜a8 17 d5! e5 18 ♖f5 gave White a pull in Azmaiparashvili-Kengis, Jurmala 1983 but an improvement for Black is 15...d5, when Perkins-Wells, London Lloyds Bank 1992 went 16 ♖e5 ♖xe5 17 dxe5 ♖d7 18 cxd5 ♜xc1 19 ♜xc1 ♖xd5 with a level game. Maintaining the tension with 14 ♖c3! is preferable.

14 ♖c3 e5

Valles Moreno-Pilgaard, Madrid 2002 went 14...♜c7 15 d5 e5 16 ♖d2 g6 17 ♖b3 ♖a6 18 ♖d2 ♖h6 19 ♜c1 ♜d8 20 ♖f1!

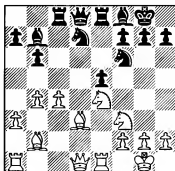


White's last sets a challenge to Black, who can pick up the c-pawn with 20...♖xd2 21 ♜xd2 ♖xc4 22 ♖xc4 ♜xc4, but then 23 ♖b5 ♜xc1 (23...♖e4 24 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 25 ♖xd6) 24 ♜xc1 sees White regain the pawn with interest. With this in mind Black turned down the offer, but White's extra space looks useful in the diagram position.

15 dxe5!?

Obviously White has formulated a specific plan here. However, serious consideration should be given to 15 d5!?, with play along the lines of Valles Moreno-Pilgaard in the previous note. We have already seen ...b6-b5 in response to White closing the centre, and it is a possibility here, although matters are far from clear after (15 d5) 15...b5 16 ♖xb5! e4 17 ♖xa7, when Black's best is 17...♜a8 18 ♖c6 ♜c7 19 ♖f1 exf3 20 ♜xf3 with chances for both sides.

15...dxe5 16 ♖e4!?



By trading on e5 White hopes to make his presence felt on the queenside in a different manner to closing with d4-d5. Part of the plan is to make inroads by reducing Black's influence on the light squares, after which the set-up with pawns on a7 and b6 might prove vulnerable. Meanwhile White has good control of the centre, making the mobilisation of Black's pawn majority unlikely. Of course the removal of the d6-pawn has rid Black of a potential weakness, let the f8-bishop see some light and generally given Black more

breathing space.

16...♗xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♜c7

White was looking to exert pressure on the light squares after 17...♜xc4 18 ♗d3 ♞c6 19 ♗b5 rather than take on e5.

18 ♞c1?

Now White does come to the aid of the c-pawn, but 18 ♗f5! would have secured a clear advantage according to Yusupov, e.g. 18...g6 19 ♗h3 ♞cd8 20 ♜c2 and the bishop pair accentuates White's lead. The text permits Black to consolidate while simultaneously assuming a more aggressive stance.

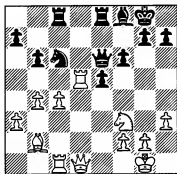
18...♞e4 19 ♜xe4 ♜c6 20 ♞e3

Yusupov proposes 20 ♞e2.

20...f6 21 ♞d3?

Nor is Yusupov impressed with this move, suggesting 21 ♜b3 as an improvement. But it is easy to see the attraction of this activation of the rook, which hits the knight while heading for d5. Moreover White seems to be well in control here but, in hindsight, this is not the case, and Black is being 'forced' along a path that takes him to a better place.

21...♞b8 22 ♞d5 ♞e6! 23 h3 ♞c6



Black's last two moves are fairly obvious, but how many of us would have already seen such a rearrangement a number of moves earlier? Anyway, the result is a fairly tidy set-up, and a closer look at the diagram position reveals that White's grip on the light squares is by no means as significant as originally

expected. Nor is Black's queenside so fragile...

24 ♜a4?! a5!

A thrust that is both easy to see and easy to miss, depending on which direction you think the game is going.

25 ♞b5 e4?!

No doubt with the clock ticking away, Black can be forgiven for missing 25...♞a7 26 ♞d5 ♜xc4 27 ♜xc4 ♜xd5 28 ♜xe8 ♜xc4 29 ♜d7 ♜f7 etc.

26 ♞d4 ♞xd4 27 ♗xd4 ♜xc4 28 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 29 ♗e3 ♞e6 30 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 31 ♗xb6 axb4 32 axb4 h6

Unfortunately for Black 32...♜xb4 33 ♜xb4 ♗xb4 34 f3 is a clearance that severely limits winning chances, while 32...♗xb4 33 ♗e3! forces 33...♞c3, when 34 ♜c8+ evens the score for good.

33 ♗e3 ♞h7 34 g4 ♗e7 35 ♜a5 ♗xb4 36 ♜a4! ♜c3 37 ♜b5! ♗f8 ½-½

It is interesting that as soon as Black places his pawn on c5, this square becomes a potential problem for him in the event of 8 ♞a4. With sensible play Black should be okay, but he must be careful when contemplating putting his pawn on d5 because the reply c4-c5 is what White is waiting for – particularly when the bishop is still on b4. As for the hedgehog set-up, this requires attention whichever side of the board you happen to be sitting on, and White has more than just b2 for the dark-squared bishop. Another factor in some lines is White's space advantage which, if nurtured, could make life difficult for Black.

### Black Plays ...d5

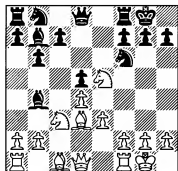
Unlike the alternative 7...c5, with which Black often decides to settle for a small centre after ...c5xd4 (e3xd4) followed ...d7-d6, here Black actually stakes a claim for the centre. With the exception of ...dxc4, which does open the long diagonal for the bishop, Black tends to maintain a pawn on d5, mainly to hold back the e3-pawn. White has

two major plans in the diagram position, namely generating a kingside attack, or trying for a space advantage on the queenside with b2-b4 (with or without c4xd5). Let us first take a look at White's rather hurried approach.

*Game 7*  
**Galliamova Ivanchuk-Goldin**  
*Novgorod 1997*

1 d4 ♕f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♕f3 b6 4 ♕c3 ♗b4  
5 e3 ♗b7 6 ♗d3 0-0 7 0-0 d5 8 cxd5  
exd5 9 ♖e5

Now that the exchange of pawns on d5 has, for the moment, considerably reduced the tension in the centre, White looks to the kingside, the e5-square playing a key role in his ambitions. This square can often be a launch pad for a kingside attack.

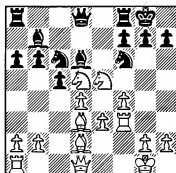


9...♗d6

Despite Bareev giving this a '?' it is nevertheless the most common move. If Black does not intend ...♗xc3 he might as well drop the bishop back now so that after the thematic central strike with ...c7-c5 it is not out on a limb on b4. Of course a couple of other moves come to mind.

9...a6?! is a luxury Black can ill afford. In Bareev-Renet, Yerevan Olympiad 1996 Black soon found himself in serious trouble: 10 ♗d2 ♗d6 11 f4 c5 12 ♗f3 and now instead of 12...cxd4 13 exd4 ♕c6 14 ♗c3 with an

edge for White, Renet tried 12...♕c6? which, at the time, was a new move. However, White fully exploited the 'extra' move (or at least he started to) and unleashed 13 ♕xd5!



The point is that after 13...♕xd5 Black's king is friendless, and 14 ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 15 ♗h3+ ♗g8 16 ♗h5 is a brutal illustration of what can befall Black after f2-f4 and ♗f3 etc. 13...cxd4 runs into 14 ♕xf6+ ♗xf6 15 ♕d7, while 13...♕xe5 14 ♕xf6+ ♗xf6 15 dxe5 ♗xf3 16 gxf3! or 16 ♗xf3 ♗xe5 17 ♗e4 ♗g6 18 ♗c4 will leave White with two all-seeing bishops. Consequently Black played 13...♗xe5 and emerged unscathed after 14 ♕xf6+? ♗xf6 15 ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 16 ♗h3+ ♗g8 17 ♗h5 ♗h4! 18 ♗h4 f6 etc. However, Bareev later found 14 fxe5!, when 14...♕xd5 15 ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 16 ♗h3+ ♗g8 17 ♗h5 f5 18 e6 catches the king, while Bareev gives 14...♗xd5 15 exf6 g6 16 ♗e1!

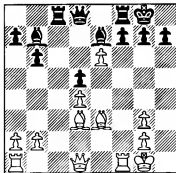
9...♖d7 is perhaps the most natural move because it monitors the advanced knight while developing a piece. The consistent reply is 10 f4. Then 10...♗xc3?! at least justifies Black's earlier choice, and after 11 bxc3 c5 White's dark-squared bishop is in danger of being locked out of the game. Piket-Illescas Cordoba, Wijk aan Zee 1997 continued 12 ♗a3 ♗c8 13 ♗e2 ♖e4 14 ♗xe4 (in reply to Yudasin's 14 c4 Psakhis offers 14...♕df6) 14...dxe4 15 ♗ad1 ♗e8 16 ♕xd7 ♗xd7 and now 17 dxc5 ♗a4 18 ♗b2 bxc5 is level but Piket's overly aggressive 17

f5 ♖a4 18 f6? (18 ♜b2 is equal) 18...♙a6! 19 ♜h5 (19 ♜g4 g6 20 ♜g5 [20 ♜f4 h5!]) 20...♙h8) met with the calm 19...♞c6! etc. Note that 15...♙xe5 16 fxe5 ♜c7 is unclear, but recapturing with the d-pawn offers White something after 16 dxe5 ♜c7 17 ♞d6 ♞fd8 18 ♞fd1 etc.

10...c5 is another perfectly reasonable move. 11 ♜f3 cxd4 12 exd4 ♙e4 13 ♜h3 ♙df6 14 ♙e2 ♞c8 was equal in Georgadzeta, USSR 1981, while Sadler-Speelman, Hastings 1992/3 went 11 ♙d2 ♙e4 12 ♙xe4 dxe4 13 ♙c4 ♙xd2 14 ♜xd2 ♙xe5 15 fxe5 ♙d5 16 b3 cxd4 17 exd4 ♞c8 and Black was doing fine.

Finally, despite the fact that White's attacking policy creates a hole on e4, the immediate 10...♙e4 looks like the worst of Black's follow-ups to 9...♙bd7 – 11 ♙xe4 dxe4 12 ♙c4. After 12...♙xe5 13 fxe5 White's presence in the centre and pressure on the f7-pawn are enough for an advantage, but this is certainly a better choice for Black than 12...♙f6? 13 ♜b3 ♜c7 14 ♙xf7 ♞xf7 15 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 16 ♜xb4, as in Gonzalez Garcia-Zambrana, Havana 2003.

9...c5 10 f4 ♙bd7 was dealt with above, while Black has also played 10...♙c6. Then Norri-Kanko, Helsinki 1997 continued 11 ♙e2 cxd4 12 exd4 ♙e4 13 ♙c3 ♞c8 14 ♙g3 ♙xe5?! (14...♙e7) 15 fxe5 ♙xg3 16 hxg3 ♙c7 17 e6!?



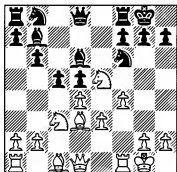
The removal of all four knights has left

White more actively placed, and the diagram position is surprisingly difficult for Black, whose bishops – in stark contrast to White's – are busy doing nothing. The point of e5-e6 is to soften up Black's defences on the light squares. For example after 17...fxe6 18 ♜h5 g6 (18...♞xf1+ 19 ♞xf1 g6 20 ♙xg6 hxg6 21 ♜xg6+ ♙h8 22 ♞f7) 19 ♙xg6 hxg6 20 ♜xg6+ ♙h8 21 ♜h6+ ♙g8 22 ♜xe6+ ♙h8 23 ♞xf8+ ♙xf8 (23...♜xf8? 24 ♞f1) White has the cheeky 24 ♙f2!, when Black's only defence is 24...♞c7 25 ♞h1+ ♞h7 26 ♞xh7+ ♙xh7 27 ♜f7+ ♙g7 28 ♜xb7 etc. Consequently Black endeavoured to hold firm with 17...♙f6 18 ♜h5 g6, but 19 exf7+ ♞xf7 20 ♙xg6! hxg6 21 ♜xg6+ anyway saw White break through, earning a good extra pawn after 21...♞g7 22 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 23 ♞xf6 ♞xg3 24 ♙f4 ♞g7 25 ♞e1, when the presence of rooks on the board compounds the defender's task.

#### 10 f4

With 10 ♙b5 White changes direction, hoping to bother the bishop. In fact Black can quite happily leave it on d6 and – thanks to an open mind – recapture with the pawn. The point is that despite the apparent weakness of the resulting doubled, isolated d-pawns and the long-term structural implications therein, between them the pawns keep an eye on four key central squares. One of these is e4 (e3-e4 will never be feasible), upon which Black will post a knight in the knowledge that a capture will 'repair' the pawns after ...d5xe4. Furthermore, even the expected 10...♙e7 is fine for Black, e.g. 11 ♜c2 c5 12 b3 a6 13 ♙c3 ♙c6 14 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 15 ♙e2 ♙b7 16 ♙b2 g6 with a balanced game in Kozima-Korchnoi, Luhacovice 1969. Incidentally White – perhaps prematurely – threw in the towel after 17 ♞ad1?! c4! 18 bxc4 dxc4 19 ♜xc4 (19 ♙xc4 ♞c8 19...♞c8 20 ♜b3 ♙d5 in view of the forced variation 21 ♜a4 b5 22 ♜xa6 ♞a8 23 ♜xb5 ♞b8.

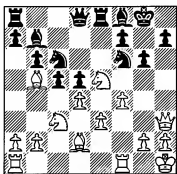
#### 10...c5



Black should really give his opponent something to think about in the centre sooner rather than later. Now White has two logical and consistent ways with which to step up the pace on the kingside, each involving the transfer of a major piece to h3 (via f3). White elects to give her rook this important role.

#### 11 ♖f3

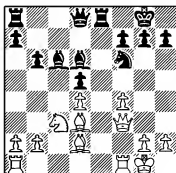
After 11 ♖f3 ♕c6 a couple of Sadler games saw 12 ♖h3 g6 13 ♖h1. Sadler-Ehlvest, Groningen 1997 continued 13...♞e8 14 ♖d2 ♖f8 15 ♖b5!?



It seems odd to voluntarily part with the light-squared bishop in this kind of position but White wants to alleviate the pressure on d4 and e5. 15...♞c8 16 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 17 f5 ♖g7, when White has the makings of an attack but Black should be okay. A year later in Sadler-Korchnoi, Tilburg 1998 Black got

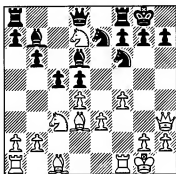
going on the queenside with the line 13...a6 14 ♖d2 b5 15 ♞ad1 cxd4 16 ♕xc6 ♖xc6 17 exd4 b4 18 ♕e2 ♖b5 simplifying in tidy fashion.

A worthy alternative is to first 'develop' the bishop and connect the rooks with 12 ♖d2. Then Black can force the removal of the e5-knight without allowing a pawn to reach e5: 12...cxd4 13 ♕xc6 ♖xc6 14 exd4 ♞e8!



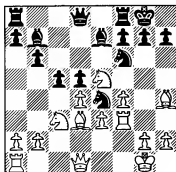
Perfectly logical, and the rook will come to the e-file anyway, but this is an improvement on 14...♖d7. Now 15 f5 ♕e4 16 ♖f4 was equal in Knaak-Lukacs, Leipzig 1986, and another game between the same players – at the same venue, in the same year – continued 15 ♞ae1? ♞c7! 16 g3 ♞b7! and Black had finally exploited the positional drawback of White's whole strategy, monitoring the e4-square with four pieces and a pawn. Consequently after 17 f5 b5!, threatening to strengthen his grip on e4, Black soon generated sufficient play on the light squares to distract White from his kingside ambitions: 18 ♖g5 ♕e4 19 ♖xe4 dxe4 20 ♞g4 ♖f8! 21 f6 g6 22 ♞h4 (22 ♖e3! b4 23 ♕e2 ♖b5! 24 ♞f2 ♖d7! is equal according to Lukacs) 22...e3 23 ♖h6 (23 ♞xe3 b4! followed by ...♞b5-d5 etc.) 23...♖d6 24 ♖f4 ♖f8 25 ♖h6 and a draw was agreed.

Incidentally after 12 ♖h3 the natural looking 12...♕e7?? loses on the spot to the surprising 13 ♕d7!



11...g6

Niklasch-Portisch, Biel 1998 continued  
 11...♖bd7 12 ♗d2 ♕e4 13 ♙e1 ♖df6 14  
 ♙h4 ♙c7



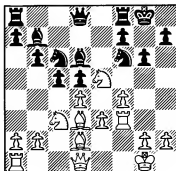
The transfer of White's 'poor' bishop from c1 to h4 deserves a look, this being standard procedure – given both time and opportunity – with a Dutch or Stonewall set-up. Meanwhile Black has occupied (and subsequently supported) the e4-square. This whole system with ♕e5 and f2-f4 is designed to launch a kingside offensive and, having placed the forces on optimum squares, White is now ready to complete the 'swinging' rook manoeuvre. The game continued 15 ♞h3 g6 16 ♜a4 a6 17 ♞f1 and White – with a little help from his opponent – eventually broke through.

In the event of 11...♕e4 White can consider 12 ♞h3, while Hansen suggests 12 ♜c2

in view of 12...f5? (12...♕f6) 13 ♕xe4! fxe4 14 ♙xe4 dxe4 15 ♜c4+ ♖h8 16 ♕g6+ etc.

11...♕c6 invites 12 ♕xd5, a theme that should be familiar (see Bareev-Renet in the note to Black's 9th move). Then taking on d5 loses to ♙xh7+, which leaves 12...♙xe5 13 fxe5 ♜xd5 14 exf6 g6 and a superior version of the aforementioned game for Black because here the moves ...a7-a6 and ♙d2 have not been played.

12 ♙d2 ♕c6



13 ♜a4

An attempted improvement on 13 ♞h3, which was unclear after 13...cxd4 14 ♕xc6 ♙xc6 15 exd4 ♕c4 in Knaak-Petrosian, Tallinn 1979.

13...♕b4 14 ♙b1 a6 15 a3 b5 16 ♜d1 ♕c6 17 ♙e1

Presumably this possibility occurred to White when she initiated this brief period of shadow-boxing, the point being that with the bishop no longer on d3, cutting communication between the queen and d4, White can now take time to send the other bishop to a more profitable post.

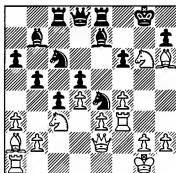
17...♞c8 18 ♙h4 ♙e7 19 ♙a2!?

White is keeping this bishop busy, its latest job being to induce Black's next, which closes the centre and releases the tension so that White can concentrate on the kingside.

19...c4 20 ♙g5 ♕e4 21 ♙h6 ♞e8 22 ♜e2 f6?

Understandable but poor. Petursson gives

22...♖xc3! 23 bxc3 ♖xa3 24 ♖xc6 ♜xc6 25  
 ♖xc4 ♖e7 as unclear.  
 23 ♖xg6!!



23...hxg6 24 ♖xe4 ♖xd4!

In fact the ostensibly fruitless a2-g8 diagonal is ripe in the case of 24...dxe4 25 ♖xc4+, e.g. 25...bxc4 26 ♜xc4+ ♖h8 27 ♜f7! ♜g8 28 ♜h3 or 25...♖h7 26 ♜h3 f5 (26...bxc4 27 ♜xc4) 27 ♖f7 etc. Black's counter on d4 keeps the game alive and keeps White on her toes...

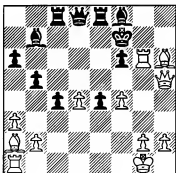
25 exd4 ♖f8

25...dxe4 26 ♜g3 (now we see how hitting the knight with ...f7-f6 so seriously neglected g6) 26...♜xd4+ 27 ♖h1 ♖h7 28 ♜g4 g5 29 ♜f5+ ♖h8 30 ♜h3 is final.

26 ♜g3! dxe4

26...♖xh6 27 ♜h5 ♖g7 28 ♜xg6 ♜e7 29 ♖xf6+ ♖f8 30 ♖xe8.

27 ♜xg6+ ♖f7 28 ♜h5!



28...♜xd4+ 29 ♖h1 ♖xh6

29...♜xb2 30 ♜d1.

30 ♜xh6+ ♖e6 31 ♜g4+ ♖d6 1-0

Now we turn to the more refined plan of settling for more territory on the queenside with b2-b4.

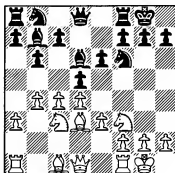
### Game 8

### Yusupov-Timman

*Candidates Match (Game 9), Linares 1992*

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♖b4 4 e3 0-0 5  
 ♖d3 d5 6 ♖f3 b6 7 0-0 ♖b7 8 cxd5

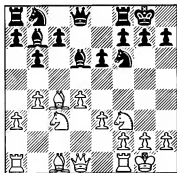
Structurally, this is a desirable exchange, seeking to fix a pawn on d5 and subsequently exert pressure on Black's already slightly compromised majority. The alternative treatment is to leave out the trade with 8 a3, when Black can avoid c4xd5 by inserting 8...dxc4, which usually transposes to normal lines after 9 ♖xc4 (but Black must make sure he is not uncomfortable with the inconvenience that follows 9 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 10 axb4 etc.). Of course after 8...♖d6 White can still take on d5, but he could have made sure of this formation with 8 cxd5. If you have a specific preference for this or that kind of position, then such considerations should be borne in mind from the outset. Anyway, after 8 a3 ♖d6 9 b4 we reach the following position:



Black must then address the possibility of

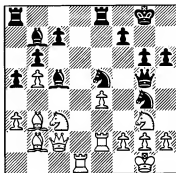


c4-c5. Then 9...a5 10 b5 dxc4 11 ♖xc4 leads to play discussed below, while the stubborn 10 c5 should give White an edge after 10...axb4 11 ♖a4 ♙e7 12 axb4 and a clear advantage after 11...♙c6 12 axb4 b5 13 cxd6 ♗xd6 14 ♙d2 ♖xa4 15 ♖xa4 bxa4 16 b5 ♙b7 17 ♗xa4. This leaves us with the more sober 9...dxc4 10 ♙xc4



Although Black has 'surrendered' the d5-pawn and with it a long-term guard over e4, the upside is the now unhindered bishop on b7. White's extra space on the queenside has not diminished, rather it has slightly different implications. If Black can neutralise it in some way it should be possible to initiate piece play in the centre with ...e6-e5. Let us look at a few examples. In the event of the challenge 10...a5 White does best to avoid 11 bxa5, when 11...♖xa5 12 ♗e2 ♖e4 13 ♖xe4 ♙xc4 14 ♙d3 ♙xd3 15 ♗xd3 ♖d7 was level in Pekarek-Piskov, Bundesliga 1993.

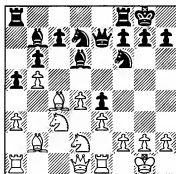
Instead, 11 b5 looks and is superior. After 11...♖b7 (12 ♙b2 – see below) White can transfer the knight from c3 to g3 in order to bolster the kingside (or contribute to an attack there if f5 comes available) and not obstruct the bishop once it comes to b2. In Poschke-Kishnev, Muenster 1993 White neglected his kingside and had to pay the price. There followed 12 ♖e1 e5 13 e4 h6 14 ♗e2 ♖e8 15 ♙b2 exd4 16 ♖xd4 ♖e5 17 ♙b3 ♙c5 18 ♖f5 ♖fg4 19 ♖e2 g6 20 ♖d1 ♗g5 21 ♖g3



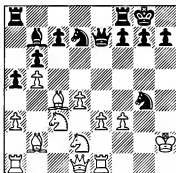
21...♖hx2! 22 ♖a4 (22 ♖hx2 ♗h4+ 23 ♖g1 ♗xg3 24 ♖a4 ♖f3+ 25 ♖f1 ♗h2) 22...♖ef3+ 23 ♖h1 ♗h4 24 gxf3 ♗h3 0-1.

10...♖b7 simply develops a piece and tempts White into bothering the bishop with 11 ♖b5, a response seen more at club level than in international competition. This is because White pays a price to 'win' a bishop for a knight after 11...a6 12 ♖xd6 cxd6 13 ♙b2 b5 14 ♙d3 ♖b6, for example. White seems to have come off worse in the deal, the b2-bishop unable to contribute to the defence of the light squares. Morovic-Korchnoi, 2nd Match game, Santiago 1991 continued 15 ♖c1 ♙e4 16 ♙e2 ♗e7 17 ♖d2 ♙g6 18 f3 ♖ac8 19 e4 and White tried to repair some of the damage, but nevertheless stood slightly worse after 19...d5 20 e5 ♖fd7. Even if Black retreats the bishop White cannot hope for anything other than a balanced game, e.g. 11...♙e7 12 ♙b2 a6 13 ♖c3 ♙d6 14 ♗e2 e5 15 dxe5 ♖xe5 16 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 and a draw was already agreed in Perez-Pachmann, European Team Championship 1961. 11 ♙b2 is the main move, waiting to pounce with 12 ♖b5! should Black try 11...e5?, which is quite natural but too eager. Consequently – now that there is a knight on d7 with which to support the thematic push of the e6-pawn – Black tends to throw in 11...a5 12 b5 (12 bxa5 ♖xa5 doesn't look right to me) in order to both commit White's pawns and eliminate ♖b5 as an option, set-

ting the game up for the inevitable 12...e5 (Black has also played a preliminary 12...♖e7 13 ♔e2 ♗ad8 before pushing the e-pawn, while the hypermodern 12...♗a7 with the idea of ...♗a8 is another approach, although Black needs to feel comfortable to play like this). Black seems to be doing fine after the standard 13 ♗e1 (13 d5 achieves a little less than nothing) 13...e4 14 ♕d2 ♖e7



For the moment the potential vulnerability of the backward c7-pawn is not a concern for Black, whose sights are set on White's lightly populated kingside. A couple of moves have been tried in the diagram position, both featuring White's f-pawn. First there is 15 f3! exf3 16 gxf3, when 16...♔xh2+ is tempting. White is under pressure after 17 ♖xh2 ♕g4+



Hansen's suggested improvement on 18 ♖g3 (18 fxf3?? ♗h4+ leads to mate)

18...♗d6? 19 f4, which saw Black's attack run out of steam in Neverov-Stocek, Lazne Bohdaneč 1996, is 18...♕xe3 19 ♖e2 ♗d6+ 20 ♕f2 ♕c2 21 ♕de4 ♗h2+ 22 ♕f1 ♗h1+ 23 ♕f2 ♗h2+ etc. However, perhaps Black can try for more with 19...♕f5+, e.g. 20 ♖g2 ♗g5+ 21 ♕f2 ♗h4+ 22 ♖g1 ♕xd4 23 ♗g2 (23 ♗f2 ♕xf3+! 24 ♕xf3 ♖xc4) 23...♗h6! (23...♕xf3+ 24 ♕xf3 ♔xf3 25 ♖xf3 ♖xc4) 24 ♗ad1 ♕c2 etc. Consequently I agree with Hansen, albeit for different reasons, that 18 ♖g1 is White's wisest course. He gives 18...♕xe3 19 ♖e2 ♗g5+ 20 ♕f2 ♕c2 21 ♕de4 ♔xe4 22 ♕xe4 ♗f4 23 ♗h1 'with a complicated struggle ahead' but 19 f4 ♗ae8 20 ♗h5 might be something for White, e.g. 20...♗d6 21 ♕ce4! ♖xf4 22 ♗g5 ♖xg5+ 23 ♕xg5 ♕xc4 24 ♕xc4 h6 25 ♕h3 and White has enough pieces on the board to hit Black's queenside. Obviously this line is ripe with possibilities, and worth further investigation regardless of which side of the board you plan to be on. In the meantime, though, Black also has the simple 16...♗ad8 followed by ...♗fe8, and the game will revolve around the success, or otherwise, of White's structure.

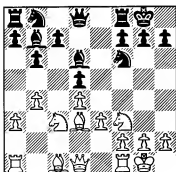
Much less risky is 15 ♔e2 ♗ad8, although White should prefer 16 f4 ♕d5 (16...exf3 17 ♔xf3 ♔xf3 18 ♖xf3 and White will achieve e3-e4) 17 ♕xd5 ♔xd5 18 ♕c4 f5 19 ♕e5 with a balanced game, rather than 16 ♖c2 ♗fe8 17 f4 exf3 18 ♔xf3 ♔xf3 19 ♕xf3 ♕e4 when control of e4 left Black better in Portisch-Petrosian, Lone Pine 1978.

Having seen how the game can develop when Black plays the capture ...d5xc4, let us now turn to the static centre that results from the moves:

#### 8...exd5 9 a3 ♔d6 10 b4

With the advance of the b-pawn White grabs a share of the queenside and dissuades Black from the often otherwise desirable ...c7-c5. Looking at the diagram position we see that, despite covering both e4 and c4 (which, after b2-b4, is now a hole), the d5-

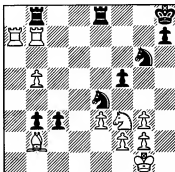
pawn also obstructs the bishop. The pawn structure can also be a problem for Black (...b7-b6 weakened the c6-square), who could well find his majority under attack from his opponent's smaller force (a factor here, remember, is the c-file). On the plus side for Black, to add to the central presence afforded by the d5-pawn, there is the e-file, Black's easy development and subsequent prospects of generating something worthwhile on the kingside.



10...a6

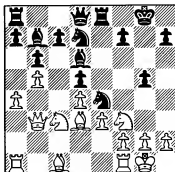
Ruling out ♖b5, which could prove troublesome. 10...♘bd7 produced a couple of interesting struggles after 11 ♖b3 ♖e8. Ehlvest-Slipak, Villa Martelli 1997 continued 12 a4 c6 13 ♙a3 ♘f8 14 ♘c2 ♘e4 15 ♘g3 ♖d7 16 ♗fd1 f5 17 ♙b2 ♘g6 18 a5!, illustrating an important necessity from White's point of view – it is imperative that White does more than just sit on the positional advantage on the queenside when Black starts to look menacing on the other flank. In fact White's queenside distraction soon took on more significant proportions after 18...♗ab8 19 axb6 axb6 20 ♗a7 ♖h8 21 b5! ♙xg3 22 hxg3 c5 23 dxc5 bxc5 (23...♘xc5 24 ♖c3 ♘xd3 25 ♖xd3 is very difficult for Black, e.g. 25...♗a8 26 ♗da1 ♗xa7 27 ♗xa7 ♗a8? 28 ♗xa8+ ♙xa8 29 ♙d4) 24 ♙c4! dxc4? (24...♘e7 is more stubborn, although Black is now too busy defending to have time for kingside ambitions) 25 ♗xd7 cxb3

26 ♗xg7 c4 27 ♗gxb7+ c3



28 ♗xh7+ (White's 'flamethrower' on the 7th rank proves decisive) 28...♙g8 29 ♗ag7+ ♙f8 30 ♙a3+ ♗e7 31 ♗xg6 ♗bb7 32 ♘e5 1-0.

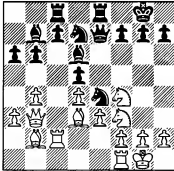
Black reacted to his opponent's cramping play on the queenside with a bigger dose of aggression on the kingside in Roemer-Nogueiras, Lugano 1987, meeting 12 b5 ♘e4 13 a4 with 13...g5



A bold thrust, perhaps, but one that fits in with the overall layout of forces, White's being mainly concentrated on the queenside, Black's pointing at the kingside. Moreover the threatened ...g5-g4 will evict White's only defender. Incidentally, you might have been wondering about the d5-pawn. In the event of 14 ♘d5 Black has 14...♘dc5 – which would have been the reply to 13 ♘d5. After 15 dxc5 ♙xd5 16 ♖xd5?? ♙xh2+ White's

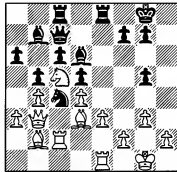
queen disappears, so an assessment of unclear seems fair after 16 ♖c2 ♗xc5 etc.

10...♕e4 11 ♕e2 a6 12 ♗b2 ♕d7 13 ♖b3 ♖e7 14 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 led to some nice manoeuvring from both players in Kanstler-Krays, Tel Aviv 1997. There followed 15 ♖c2!? ♖fe8 16 ♕f4!?



This provocative move tempts Black into parting with the useful dark-squared bishop to damage White's structure. In fact this doesn't look like a good deal for Black, who would be left with a poor relative on b7, a potential liability in the shape of the c-pawn and the prospect of being challenged on the e-file. Consequently the game continued 16...c6 17 ♖fc1 h6 18 ♗f1 b5!? 19 ♕d3 ♕b6 20 ♕c5 ♕c4 and both sides had allowed an enemy knight to take up residence on home territory. This kind of situation requires careful handling with regard to recapturing the knights. For example if Black were to remove the unwelcome visitor, then d4xc5 both opens the long diagonal and gifts White an attractive new outpost on d4. As for White, the hitherto successful containment of Black's majority would come to an end with a trade on c4 because the subsequent recapture would see the creation of a protected passed pawn. Such a drastic alteration of the pawn formation is not part of White's general strategy – unless it can be engineered under favourable circumstances – which means playing 'around' the intruder. 21 ♗d3

♖c7 22 g3 ♕g5 23 ♕xg5 hxg5 24 ♖c1



White prepares a switch to the kingside. 24...♖c4 25 ♗xc4 ♖xd4 26 e4 ♕xb2 27 ♖xb2 and, ironically, the well placed knights had been voluntarily exchanged for spectator bishops. White took on b7 in anticipation of an offensive of sorts on the light squares, which in turn prompted Black to do the same for defensive purposes rather than see the support of the knight undermined. The game continued 27...dxe4 28 ♖xe4 ♖b6 29 ♖c1 ♖xc4 30 ♗xc4 ♖xd4 31 ♖xg5 ♖c8 32 ♗d2 ♖xe4 33 ♖xd6 ♖e1+ 34 ♕g2 ♖e4+ 35 ♕g1 ♖e1+ with a draw.

#### 11 ♖b3

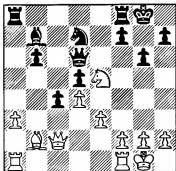
Keeping an eye on d5 and protecting the b-pawn in readiness for further expansion with a3-a4.

#### 11...♕bd7

Black concentrates on his own development. Instead 11...♖e7 takes aim at the b4-pawn. 12 ♖b1 ♕bd7 13 a4 ♕e4 14 b5 (14 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♕c3 16 ♖b3 ♕xb1 17 ♖xb1 g6 gives White compensation but – in my opinion – only just) 14...♕df6 15 bxa6 ♗xa6 16 ♕b5 c5 17 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 18 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 19 dxc5 bxc5 20 ♗b2 ♖fa8 favoured Black in Kharitonov-Ilijin, Peniscola 2002. Black's knights were so good together that White soon took on f6.

Yusupov-Timman, Match 5th Match game, Linares 1992 saw the immediate 12 b5 axb5 13 ♕xb5 ♕bd7 14 ♗b2 c5 and now 15

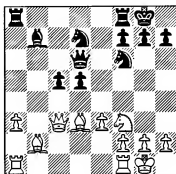
Qxd6 ♖xd6 16 ♔f5 c4 17 ♜c2 g6 (17...♞fe8 18 ♘e5 ♘c8 is an edge for White according to Yusupov) 18 ♘d7 rid Black of a decent knight. Then 18...♜xd7 19 ♘e5 ♜c6 20 f3 ♘d7 21 ♞f1 f6 22 ♘d7 ♜xd7 23 c4 is progress only for White, so there followed 18...♘d7 19 ♘e5



The presence of bishops of opposite colour in these situations means that some kind of initiative takes on greater significance when the defender is unable to contest his opponent's command of the 'active' colour complex. Consequently Black must avoid exchanging the last pair of knights under unfavourable circumstances. For example after 19...♘e5? 20 dxe5 White gains an 'extra' kingside pawn (which clamps down on f6) with which to add weight to an offensive there, while the d4-square also becomes available for the bishop, e.g. 20...♞e6 21 ♘d4 ♘c6 22 f4 ♘a4 23 ♞b1 ♘b3 24 f5 with a clear advantage to White. Ftacnik's 19...f6!, on the other hand, does not hand over any extra dark squares to White, and after 20 ♘xd7 (20 ♘f3?) 20...♜xd7 Black secures equality after 21 f3 f5! or 21 e4 dxe4 22 ♜xc4+ ♜d5 etc. Instead there followed 19...♞fe8 20 ♘c3 ♘c6 21 ♞b2 and now 21...f6! is Ftacnik's suggestion, when 22 ♘d7 ♘d7 is equal.

Another Yusupov game, this time as White against Dautov in Nussloch 1996, saw the a1-h8 diagonal cleared before the re-

moval of the bishop: 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 ♘xd6 ♜xd6 17 ♜c3



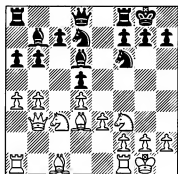
Clearly Black cannot ignore the fact that the enemy queen and bishop are lined up against g7! In fact Black must anyway be careful. For example 17...♘b6? threatens the fork on a4 and practically forces the retreat 18 ♜c2, but then we see how useful the knight was on d7 (supporting both f6 and c5) because White threatens to take on f6, when the recapture with the queen drops the c5-pawn. Even after 18...♘e4 White has the crafty 19 ♞fb1! with a pull in view of the new threat of ♘xg7 followed by (...♘xg7) ♞b2+ etc. Better is the game continuation's 17...♘a6!, when 18 ♞fd1 ♘d3 19 ♘d3 ♞fb8! should have been followed up by 20 ♞ad1, with ♞xd5! for Black to deal with, rather than 20 ♞c1? c4! 21 ♞dd1 ♘c5 22 ♜c2 ♘d3, which worked out well for Black.

11...♘c6 does not blunder a pawn because 12 ♘xd5?? loses due to 12...♘xd5 13 ♜xd5 ♘xh2+, but 12 ♘b2 ♞e8 13 ♞f1 is enough to secure White a lead of some sort, e.g. 13...♞b8 14 ♞a4 (14 b5!? - Psakhis) 14...♘e7 (14...b5 15 ♞b3 can't help Black) 15 b5 axb5 16 ♘xb5 ♘g6 (16...♞a8!? 17 ♜c2! c6 18 ♘xd6 ♜xd6 19 a4 leaves Black slightly worse) 17 ♘d6, as in Kanstler-Korchnoi, Beer Sheva 1997.

## 12 a4

White's latest further encroaches on Black's queenside and prepares to challenge

the d6-bishop, which is currently doing an important job of protecting the c7-pawn.



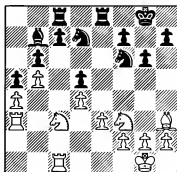
### 12...♖e7

12...♖e4 tempts White into opening the long diagonal with 13 ♖xd5, when Ftacnik-Ligterink, Wijk aan Zee 1985 continued 13...♖g5 14 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 15 e4 ♖xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 17 exd5 ♖xb4 18 ♖f4 ♖f6! with equality. Here 15 ♖e4 ♖xh2+ 16 ♖xh2 ♖h4+ 17 ♖g1 ♖xe4 18 ♖f4 is more pleasant for Black, but Dautov's suggestion of meeting ...♖g5 with 14 ♖c2! might cast doubt on Black's strategy, e.g. 14...♖c8 15 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 16 ♖f3.

As we will see in the main game the best squares for Black's rooks are far from obvious, but the natural 12...♖c8 would no doubt be a very popular choice with most players. Then in Gligoric-Petrosian, Bugojno 1982 Black voluntarily saddled himself with doubled d-pawns: 13 ♖a3 g6 14 b5 a5 15 ♖ac1 ♖e7 16 ♖xd6 cxd6 17 ♖c2 ♖ac8 18 ♖fc1 ♖f8 19 ♖e2 ♖xc2 20 ♖xc2 ♖e6 and, while White's structural advantage was not in question, what can be done about it is another matter. Clear thinking professionals from the great Soviet Chess Schools might try to avoid such damage, but they will also tell you that weaknesses are a serious problem only when they can be attacked. In this case White's knights cannot get within striking range of the d6-pawn (note that there is now no target on c7) or the b6-pawn, which leaves its part-

ner on d5 (a greater cause for concern for Black), while the c-file needs watching over. I suppose most of us would need some time to feel comfortable sitting on Black's side of the board, and many club players would not even contemplate allowing ...c7xd6 (this 'fear' alone might influence Black's choices).

Returning to the position after 13 ♖a3, in Handke-Onischuk, Fuerth 1998 White preferred to maintain the tension on the a3-f8 diagonal, a subsequent trade on a3 leaving Black with a decision to make regarding the welfare of the c7-pawn. There followed 13...♖e7 14 b5 a5 15 ♖fc1 ♖ac8 16 ♖f5 g6 17 ♖h3 ♖xa3 18 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 19 ♖xa3



The diagram position is typical of what White should have in mind – assuming even a modest amount of planning or preparation – when employing this system of patient queenside play. Nothing exciting has happened thus far, rather both sides have addressed positional, structural issues, any thoughts Black had of generating 'counterplay' on the kingside ending with the queen's departure. White will soon be ready to double on the c-file with immediate problems for Black. Consequently Onischuk takes ostensibly drastic measures in an effort to close out the enemy rooks... 19...c5 20 ♖e5 (20 bxc6 ♖xc6 creates a backward pawn on b6, an accompanying hole on b5 and an isolated pawn on d5, but these factors are outweighed by Black's rapid deployment of rooks on the

c-file) 20...♖xe5! 21 dxe5 ♜xe5 22 ♙xc8 ♙xc8 23 ♕e2 ♙b7 24 f3 ♕e8 25 ♜d3 ♖f8 26 ♖f2 ♕c7 27 ♜cd1 f5 and although the onus was on Black to prevent a decisive infiltration, the impressive wall of pawns and reasonably well placed pieces combined well (a draw resulted after another fifty or so moves).

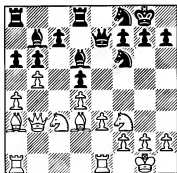
**13 ♙a3 ♜fd8**

13...c6!? (Dautov) 14 a5 b5 15 ♕d2 is given in NCO, Timman's evaluation of unclear being indicative of the mutually awkward situation on the queenside. The a5-pawn prevents the thematic closing of the c-file with ...♖b6-c4, the d6-square being the only route, while the fixed, backward b4-pawn requires constant protection. 13...♜fb8!? has also been tried, supporting the bishop in anticipation of breaking out with ...c7-c5. White's simplest response seems to be the now familiar – and in this case stubborn – 14 b5.

**14 ♜fe1**

14 b5 ♙a3 (14...a5 is almost identical to Handke-Onischuk in the note to Black's 12th move) 15 bxa6! is an idea for White that is worth remembering. White secured an edge in Yusupov-Benjamin, Amsterdam Donner Memorial 1994, 15...♙xa6 16 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 17 ♜xa3 c6 18 ♚a2 ♜da8 19 ♜c1 h6 20 ♜ac2 resulting in Black having the inferior structure.

**14...♕f8 15 b5**



White reacts to the knight's arrival on f8 by stepping up the pace. The slower 15 ♚a2 gives Black time for 15...♕e4!, with the makings of counterplay according to Yusupov.

**15...♙xa3**

White monitors the c6-square after 15...axb5 16 ♙xd6 ♜xd6 17 axb5 so that Black's attempt to rid himself of the potential liability on c7 with ...c7-c6/c5 merely leads to a fresh weakness on b6. Avoiding the opening of lines with 15...a5 invites White to jump in on e5 (exploiting the neglect of this square caused by ...♕f8), 16 ♕e5 ♕g6 17 f4 affording White a useful territorial supremacy (note the vulnerability of the c6-square here).

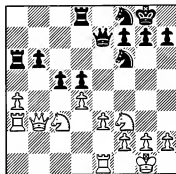
**16 bxa6!**

Here it is again. In fact White should anyway throw in this capture as 16 ♜xa3! axb5 17 ♕xb5 c6 18 ♕c3 b5! exploits the pin on the a-file.

**16...♙xa6 17 ♙xa6 ♜xa6**

Exchanging is preferable for Black than keeping the bishops on the board, e.g. 17...♙d6 18 ♙b7, when White's accentuated grip on the light squares is more significant than Black's extra influence on the other colour complex. Moreover, with White's bishop still in play it will be difficult for Black to use the a-file.

**18 ♜xa3 c5**



White has something to defend in the shape of the a4-pawn and Black had both c7 and d5 to think about. With this in mind,

Timman's latest thrust at least introduces the possibility of turning the hitherto slight worry into a protected passed pawn. The d5-pawn will still be susceptible to attack and there is a new backward pawn on b6, but both can be supported, and pushing the c-pawn also serves to push White back a little. In the event of d4xc5 and the obvious recapture ...b6xc5 White would not be in a position to attack the pawn duo, d5 would no longer be a fixed target and there would be nothing to aim at on b6.

**19 ♖a2 ♕e4!?** **20 ♖c1**

Not falling for 20 ♕xd5 ♖e6, e.g. 21 ♖b5 ♖xd5 22 ♖xa6 ♖xa2 etc.

**20...c4**

No doubt part of the plan. Dautov's 20...♕xc3 21 ♖xc3 ♕e6 22 ♖b5 ♖da8 also makes sense.

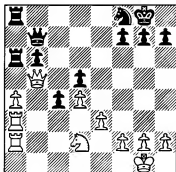
**21 ♖b5 ♕xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖b7 23 ♕d2**

Ftacnik's 23 a5 looks equal after 23...♖da8 24 ♖ca3 ♕d7 25 ♖b4 bxa5 26 ♖xa5 but White prefers to keep the fire burning (although this works both ways, remember), sending the knight over to where the action is.

**23...♖da8?!**

Black should have followed suit: 23...♕d7 24 ♖ca3 ♕f6, e.g. 25 ♕b1 ♕e4 26 f3 ♕d6 and the knight plays an important role on d6.

**24 ♖ca3**



Completing the exodus to the a-file and making way for ♕b1-c3. Positions such as

this and the related situations seen thus far deserve to be given some time from the reader. A session of blitz games revolving around the structural possibilities that result from White's b2-b4 strategy would be useful as it helps to be acquainted with what can happen before rather than during a game.

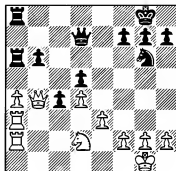
**24...♖d7**

24...♖a5 25 ♖b4 b5 26 ♕b1 ♖d7 27 ♕c3 bxa4 28 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 29 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 30 ♕xa4 has been evaluated as clearly better for White in view of the likely pressure on d5. This might be generous, but Black is certainly defending here.

**25 ♖b4?**

White seems to want to keep his queen in play, but in his notes to the game Yusupov gives 25 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 26 ♕b1 with the plan of ♕c3, defending the a-pawn, followed by ♖b2-b5 to hit the d5-pawn. Of course White needs to keep an eye on his back rank, so a possible continuation then is 26...♕f6 27 ♕c3 ♕f8 28 ♖b2 ♕e7 29 f3, helping the king and introducing an equally important thematic challenge in the centre with e3-e4 to undermine the defence of the c4-pawn.

**25...♕g6**



**26 g3?!**

26 h3 gives Black less to bite on.

**26...h5 27 ♕b1**

With the pressure gradually mounting on him during the last few moves White would like to respond in the centre with 27 e4?!, but



then 27...dxe4 28 ♖xc4 b5! exploits the pin.

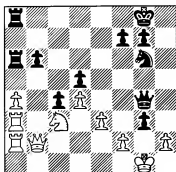
**27...h4 28 ♖c3 ♖g4**

It is often the case that a weakness that has required a certain amount of attention for much of the game can serve to distract the opponent from developments in other areas, and here White's fixation with actually making something of his queenside advantage has led to Black being able to turn to the kingside. Now 29 ♖xd5? ♖f3 30 ♖c7 h3 is a tempting way to punish ♖xd5, but far less messy is 29...♖d1+ 30 ♖g2 h3+ 31 ♖xh3 ♖h5+ 32 ♖g2 ♖xd5+, impressively bouncing off the king.

**29 ♖b2**

White prefers the tidy route to 29 ♖b5 hxg3 30 hxg3 ♖a5 31 ♖xb6 ♖h4 etc.

**29...hxg3**



The only pieces to have moved since the previous diagram are the queens and knights. Black's structural weaknesses remain but the flavour of the struggle has changed.

**30 fxg3**

Traditionally the rule is to capture towards the centre, but here 30 fxg3? ♖h4 is very good for Black, e.g. 31 ♖e2 ♖h3! 32 gxh4 b5 33 h5 b4 or 31 ♖xd5 ♖d1+ 32 ♖h2 ♖f3+ 33 ♖g2 ♖c1+ and White's major pieces, huddled together over on the queenside are, quite literally, spectators (couldn't resist that one).

**30...♖e7 31 ♖f2**

White could consider simplifying here

with Dautov's suggestion of 31 ♖e2 ♖xe2 32 ♖xe2 (32 ♖xc2 b5!) when 32...b5 33 ♖xb5 ♖xa4 34 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 35 ♖f2 favours Black but at least the material has been considerably reduced.

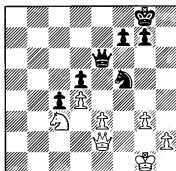
**31...b5 32 ♖xb5 ♖xa4 33 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 34 ♖c3**

Hoping to keep the enemy queen at bay, which is not the case after 34 ♖xa4 ♖d1+ 35 ♖g2 ♖xa4 36 ♖c3 (36 ♖b2 ♖f5) 36...♖b3 37 ♖d2.

**34...♖xa2 35 ♖xa2 ♖e6**

35...♖f3 36 ♖e2.

**36 ♖e2 ♖f5**



Both sides now have a backward pawn to protect but the bonus is the passed pawn. Consequently Black has a clear advantage, but whether he can make anything of this after such a battle is another question. As far as we are concerned, what is interesting is the fact that Black has ultimately come out on top in terms of his being under pressure from White on the queenside. Notice as we play through the rest of the game just how easily the c-pawn can prove the decisive factor.

**37 ♖f2 ♖d6 38 ♖c2 f5 39 ♖e2 ♖e4+ 40 ♖g2**

40 ♖f3 is dangerous in view of 40...♖a6 41 ♖f4 ♖a1! 42 ♖g2 c3! etc.

**40...♖f6**

40...♖a6! (Dautov) makes sense, e.g. 41 ♖b2 ♖h7 followed by ...♖a4-b3 and ...c4-c3,

or 41 ♖f4 ♗b5 42 ♗a2 c3! etc.

**41 ♖f4 ♗e4+?**

Presumably Black concentrated mostly on 41...♗xe3 42 ♗xf5 ♗xd4 43 ♗c8+ when 43...♗h7 44 ♗f5+ and so on is forced as 43...♗f7?? 44 ♗e6+ mates. Otherwise he would have settled on 41...♖g4! 42 ♖xe6 ♖xe3+ 43 ♗f2 ♖xc2 44 ♖c7 ♖b4!, e.g. 45 ♗e3 ♗f7 46 ♗d2 ♗e7 47 ♗c3 ♗d7. Instead this queen trade edges the game towards the draw.

**42 ♗xe4 dxe4 43 ♗f2! ♖g4+**

43...g5 44 ♖e6 is equal.

**44 ♗e2 ♖xh2 45 ♖g6 c3**

Ftacnik gives 45...♗h7 46 ♖e7 g6 47 d5 as giving White counterplay, while 45...♗f7 46 ♖e5+ ♗e6 47 ♖xc4 is level.

**46 ♖e7+ ♗f7 47 ♖xf5 ♖f1**

47...♗e6 48 ♖xg7+ ♗d5 49 ♖f5 ♖f3 50 ♗d1 ♗c4 51 d5! ♗b3 52 ♗c1 c2 53 d6 ♗c3 and now not the suicidal 54 d7?? ♖e1 55 d8♗ ♖d3+ 56 ♗xd3+ exd3 but 54 ♖e7! ♖e5 55 ♖d5+ ♗b3 56 ♖f4.

**48 ♗d1**

48 ♗xf1?? c2.

**48...♗f6 49 g4 g6 ½-½**

The game could have ended with the further moves 50 ♖d6 ♖xe3+ 51 ♗c1 etc.

# CHAPTER THREE

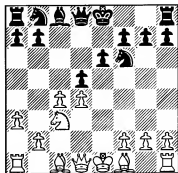
## 4...c5: White Plays 5 ♖e2



1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♖e2

Lines with 5...cxd4 6 exd4 d5 are investigated in Games 9-11. In Game 9 Black elects to steer the game in a direction of his choosing by resolving matters in the centre after 7 a3 with 7...♗xc3+ 8 ♖xc3 dxc4, eyeing the isolated d4-pawn and concentrating (in traditional style) on the d5-square. Game 10, on the other hand, features a fight for White's advanced pawns after (7 a3) 7...♗e7 8 c5. Sherbakov does without a2-a3 in Game 11, meeting ...d7-d5 with the immediate 7 c5. Again structure is a key theme, but the presence of the bishop on b4, cut off from friendly forces, makes a difference. In Game 12 Black holds back the d-pawn, the point being to lure forward White's own to d5 – and even further to d6. Of course such an advance should leave the pawn susceptible to attack, but White has an undeniable space advantage, and engineering the win of d6 can take time and can run the risk of leaving Black's pieces oddly placed.

♖e2 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♖xc3



### 8...dxc4

8...♖c6 9 c5 is an inferior mix of systems for Black, e.g. 9...0-0 10 ♗c2 ♖e4 11 ♖xe4 dxe4 12 ♗e3 f5 13 ♗d2 with a comfortable edge for White. With the capture on c4 Black concentrates on the isolated d4-pawn and the traditional and thematic occupation of the square in front of it. The price for this 'target' is the surrender of the dark-squared bishop, the point being that in the event of a quick ...♖c6 White's own will have to come to the not too desirable e3-square.

### 9 ♗xc4 ♖c6

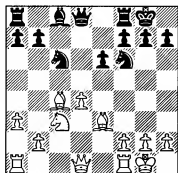
Consistent, although Black has also tried alternative queenside plans after 9...0-0 10

*Game 9*  
**Morovic-Rivas Pastor**  
*Leon 1995*

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5

0-0. Verhaegen-Meijers, Leuven 2002 saw Black's experimental play successfully confuse his lower rated opponent (or White confused himself) after 10...a6?! 11 ♖e3 b5 12 ♜f3! ♖a7 (Black plans to transfer the rook to d7 before posting the bishop on b7, when both d4 and d5 would be firmly in his sights) 13 d5! ♜c7 14 ♖b6? bxc4 15 ♜g3 e5 16 ♜xe5 ♖bd7 17 ♜xc7 ♖xb6 and Black emerged from the deal with a clear lead. However, Black's strategy takes time, and 14 ♖b3! is a considerable improvement, renewing the threat of ♖b6, e.g. 14...♖b7 15 ♜f4! ♖xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 17 ♖b6. Even worse is 10...b6? in view of 11 ♜f3.

10 ♖e3 0-0 11 0-0



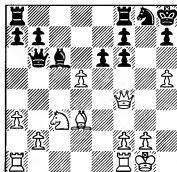
### 11...b6

11...a6 12 ♖a2 b5?! not surprisingly gives White time for 13 d5!, when Semkov-Stefanov, Varna 1982 saw White emerge with a nice long-term advantage after 13...♖xd5 14 ♖xd5 exd5 15 ♖xd5 ♜f6 16 ♜f3 ♜xf3 17 ♖xf3 ♖b7 18 b4 ♖d8 19 ♖c5 ♖e8 20 ♜fe1. Hansen suggests 12...♜e8 to prepare for d4-d5, but White can continue with something constructive such as 13 ♜d3 followed by ♜ad1 and so on, when the rook move does not really fit in. Anyway, 11...a6 fails to measure up to alternatives.

The precautionary 11...h6 defends g5 and awaits developments. It might lack ambition but, nevertheless, offers decent chances of minimising White's attacking chances com-

pared with 11...b6. Xu Jun-Cvitan, Bled 2002 went 12 ♖d3 ♖e7 13 ♖f4 ♖ed5 14 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♖e5 ♖d7 16 ♜e1 ♖c6 17 ♖c2 ♜c8 18 ♜d3 f5 19 ♖b3 ♜g5 20 f3 a6 with a slight edge for White (more active), although Black is pretty solid. More recently Safin-Xu Jun, Jodhpur 2003 saw Xu Jun on the other side of the board. This time all the minor pieces came off – 12 ♜e1 ♖e7 13 ♖f4 ♖ed5 14 ♖e5 ♖d7 15 ♜d3 ♖c6 16 ♖a2 ♖d7 17 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 18 ♖b1?! (18 ♖xd5 offers White a pull) 18...f5 19 ♖a2 ♖xa2 20 ♜xa2 ♖xe5 21 ♜xe5 ♜b6 22 b4 ♜ad8 23 ♜d2 ♜d6 24 h3 ♜fd8 with a level game.

White was direct in Lautier-Bologan, Reykjavic 2003: 11...♖e7 12 ♜f3 ♜c7 13 ♖d3 ♖d7 14 ♖f4 ♜b6 15 ♖e5 ♖c6 (15...♜xb2? runs into 16 ♖xf6 gxf6 17 ♜b1 as 17...♜xc3 18 ♖xh7+ drops the queen and 17...♜d2 18 ♖e4 is equally decisive) 16 ♜g3 ♖g6 17 ♖xf6 gxf6 18 h4 ♖h8 19 h5 ♖e7 20 ♜f4 ♖g8 21 d5!



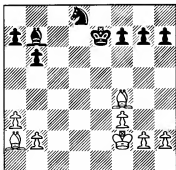
The central advance accentuates the significance of Black's kingside weaknesses as taking on d5 allows White to align the queen and bishop after ♜f5. After the forced 21...♖d7 Black was struggling.

### 12 ♜f3

One of several. 12 d5?! has no bite here as Black is not put under any pressure and can simplify with ease: 12...cxd5 13 ♖xd5 ♖e6 14 ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 15 ♖xe6 ♜xe6 16 ♜e1 ♜f5 was level in Ki.Georgiev-Andersson, Thessa-

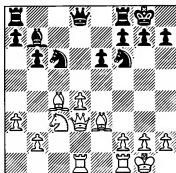
loniki Olympiad 1984, the game already ending in a draw after 17 ♖b1 ♗b5 18 b4 h6 19 h3 ♙fd8 20 ♖e4.

12 ♙e1 ♗b7 13 ♙a2 ♗d7 14 d5 exd5 15 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♙ad8 17 ♗xd7 ♙xd7 was seen in Knaak-Lautier, Novi Sad 1990. There followed 18 ♙ad1 ♙xd1 19 ♙xd1 ♙d8 20 ♙xd8+ ♖xd8 21 f3 ♖f8 22 ♖f2 ♖e7 23 ♙f4



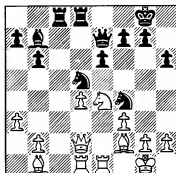
Black must be prepared to defend this kind of ending in these IQP lines, holding firm with little in the way of winning prospects. For his part, White should use the bishop pair patiently (Knaak eventually won on the 71st move).

12 ♗d3 ♗b7 13 ♙ad1 is logical:



With the d-pawn protected White is ready to reactivate the hitherto quiet bishop on g5, reducing Black's control over the important d5-square. Therefore 13...h6 makes sense.

Zaja-Orak, Pula 2001 is a good illustration of what can happen to Black if he takes his eye off d5. There followed 14 ♙f4 ♙c8 15 ♙a2 ♖e7 16 ♙c5 ♖f5 17 ♗h3 ♖e4? (17...♖d5 is the thematic move) 18 d5! and the slope was becoming slippery for Black, whose attempt to deal with the sudden downturn in his fortunes backfired after 18...♖g5 19 ♗g4 h5 20 ♗xh5 ♙xc3 21 ♙xc3 ♖h4 22 f4 etc. Of course White can anyway be stubborn and try 14 f3, making way for the bishop to come to the h4-d8 diagonal via f2 to h4. Then 14...♙c8?! invites 15 ♙a2 ♙c7 16 ♗b1 when Black continued with his rook manoeuvre in Gligoric-Djuric, Vrsac 1983, only to see his king come under fire after 16...♙d7 17 ♖e4 ♙e8 18 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 19 ♗h7+ ♖f8 20 ♙e4 ♖e7 21 d5! ♖xd5 22 ♙d4 e5 23 ♙c3 with menacing compensation for the pawn. The immediate 14...♖e7 15 ♙a2 ♖ed5 (15...♖fd5 is another possibility) 16 ♙f2 ♙c8 is better, consolidating before bringing the rook into play. Shulman-Feygin, Nikolaev 1995 went 17 ♙f1 ♗e7 18 ♖e4 ♖h5! 19 ♗b1 ♖hf4 20 ♗d2 ♙fd8



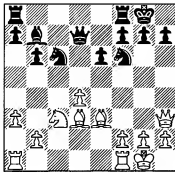
Chances are even, Black having a fair share of the board and a firm blockade of the d-pawn. However, without his dark-squared bishop Black must not become overconfident as far as the safety of his kingside is concerned. In fact White's rook soon found itself on g4, and was later sacrificed (soundly) on g7.

In Balashov-Gipslis, USSR Championship 1970 Black seemed not to worry about the pin and played the otherwise desirable 13...♖e7, countering 14 ♖g5 ♗g6 15 f4 with 15...h6, when 16 f5! exf5 17 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♖xf5 ♗d6 19 ♖df1 ♖h8 handed White a pleasant, easy to play position.

### 12...♖b7 13 ♗h3

The ♗ from Wells seems fair enough given that the queen will need to move away from the long diagonal eventually, and h3 is an active posting. However, White can also preface ♗h3 with 13 ♖d3 and, at club level in particular I can see this being a more popular and potentially profitable choice. Black would like to take the sting out of this relocation of the bishop by sending his queen's knight to g6, but by maintaining the pin on the knight White rules out an immediate ...♖e7.

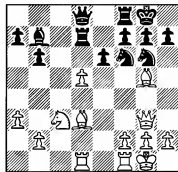
13...♗d7 14 ♗h3



14...♖e7 15 ♖g5 favours White according to NCO. I agree, and after 15...♗g6 16 ♖xf6 gxf6 17 ♖ad1 (17 d5 ♖xd5 18 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 19 ♖e4 ♗b7 20 ♗f3 was an edge for White in Vaganian-A.Petrosian, Telavi 1982) Black's structure is sure to leave him playing catch-up. 17...♖fd8 18 ♖fe1 f5 19 d5! ♖xd5 20 ♖xf5 ♗b7 21 ♖xg6 hxg6 22 ♖d4 ♖g7 23 ♖ed1 was a tidy lead in Giorgadze-Ayas, Vendrell 1996, while 17...♖ad8 18 ♖e4! ♖xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♗e7 20 ♖fe1 f5 21 ♖c3 ♗g5 22 d5!, Najer-Mitenkov, Moscow 1996, high-

lighted the efficacy of the d4-d5 advance in response to Black's kingside pawns being damaged. After 22...♖f4 23 ♗f3 ♖xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 25 ♖xd5 exd5 26 ♗xd5 Black had another difficult ending to look forward to. Returning to the position after 14 ♗h3, above, you may be wondering whether Black can get away with 14 ...♖xd4?! here. The first feature to note is that in reply to the obvious 15 ♖ad1 Black is advised to avoid the example set in Milovanovic-Sentic, Djakovo 1994, when 15...e5?? 16 ♖xh7+ met with immediate resignation as the queen drops after both 16...♖xh7 and 16...♗h8 17 ♖f5+. Black didn't walk into this trap (which, you must admit, has just attracted you to 13 ♖d3...) in Levitt-Contin, Amantea 1995, although after 15...♖ad8 16 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 18 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 the position favoured favoured the queen.

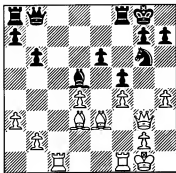
Kasparov-Psakhis, 6th Match game, La Manga 1990 continued 13...♖c8 14 ♖ad1 ♖c7 15 ♗h3 ♖e7 16 ♖g5! ♗g6 17 ♗g3 ♖d7 18 d5!



It is surprising just how many times a move or idea that one side has invested time and effort to prevent is played anyway – and often with even greater effect than the original possibility indicated. Here Black has half an army covering d5 but the advance causes him difficulties. For example 18...♖xd5 19 ♖b5! has been evaluated as clearly better for White after 19...♖d6 20 ♖xf6 gxf6 21 ♖e4!

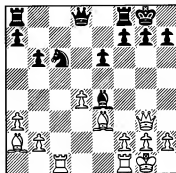
or 19...♖b7 20 ♖xd5 exd5 21 ♙c6 ♖b8 22 ♙xd5 etc. 19...♗c7 20 ♖xd5 exd5 21 ♙xf6 gxf6 22 ♗b3 looks like Black's best option but the pawns are poor. Instead the game went 18...exd5 19 ♙f5 ♗e7 (or 19...♗d6 20 ♖b5 ♗c6 21 ♖xa7) 20 h4! ♗c7 21 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 22 ♗fe1 and White will emerge with something.

In the event of 13 ♗g3 ♖e7 (13...♖xd4? 14 ♗ad1) 14 ♙d3 Black must be careful when contemplating the journey of his knight, e.g. 14...♖f5 15 ♙xf5 exf5 16 ♙g5 ♗xd4 17 ♗ad1 ♗g4 18 ♙xf6 ♗xg3 19 fsg3 gxf6 20 ♗xf5 is quite poor for Black. Wells-Chernin, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1993 is a good model for Black: 14...♖g6 15 ♗ad1 ♗b8!? (the alternative line 15...♖d5 16 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♙xg6 hxg6 is equal, but Black tempts White into being overly aggressive) 16 f4! ♖d5 17 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 18 ♗c1 (18 f5 ♗xg3 19 hxg3 exf5 20 ♙xf5 is a lesser evil) 18...f5! 19 h4



Now Black could have considered ...♖h8-f7-d6-e4 or an alternative route (also via h8 and f7) to g4. Instead the sensible 19...♗b7 20 ♗c3 (20 h5 ♖e7 21 h6 ♗f7 followed by ...♗h8 and ...♗g8) 20...♖e7 was enough for a clear lead thanks to the domination of the light squares.

13 ♙a2 transposes to Galianina Ryjanova-Fokin, Orsk 2000, when Black played 13...♖a5 14 ♗g3 ♖e4 15 ♖xc4 ♙xc4 16 ♗ac1! ♖c6?



Better is 16...♗f6, but Black seems to be doing fine after returning the knight to the fold. The game came to an odd end: 17 d5 ♙xd5 18 ♙h6 ♗f6 19 ♙xd5 and Black resigned in view of 19...exd5 20 ♗xc6 etc. However, 19...♖d4! threatens the fork on e2, a possible follow-up being 20 ♗xg7+ ♗xg7 21 ♙xg7 ♖e2+ 22 ♖h1 ♖xg7 23 ♙xa8 ♖xc1 and the battle goes on. Ironically, in the diagram position White can play 17 f3! ♙d5 18 ♙h6, when 18...♗f6 19 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 20 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 21 ♙xd5 exd5 22 ♗xc6 nets a pawn.

13...♖e7 14 ♗ad1

With ...♖e7 already played it makes less sense to drop the bishop to d3, e.g. 14 ♙d3 ♖g6 15 f4 ♖d5 16 f5 exf5 17 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 18 ♙xf5 ♗h4 with equality in Vaisser-Mednis, Palma 1989, or 15 ♗ad1 ♖d5 16 ♙xg6 hxg6 17 ♖e4 ♖xc3 18 ♗xc3 ♗d5 19 f3 ♗ac8 20 ♗d2 ♗fd8 21 ♗fd1 ♗f5, when the d-pawn was about to receive unwelcome, unyielding attention in Loureiro-Ricardi, Sao Paulo 1986 (Black won on the 111th move).

14...♖fd5 15 ♙g5

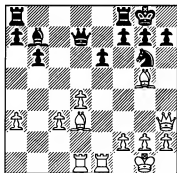
15 ♙d3 f5 16 ♗fe1 ♖g6 17 ♙fl ♗c8 18 ♙c1 ♗d7 was equal in Garcia Palermo-Am.Rodriguez, Havana 1986.

15...♗d7

15...h6 16 ♙d3 f5 17 ♙c1 ♗c8 worked out okay for Black in Utasi-Am.Rodriguez, Havana 1986. Perhaps White could throw in 16 ♙xd5 here, exploiting the pin to alter the

structure after 16...exd5 17 ♖xc7 ♜xc7 18 ♜fe1 with the traditional good knight versus bishop scenario, or 16...♙xd5 17 ♞xd5 exd5 with the slightest of edges for White.

**16 ♜fe1 ♖g6 17 ♙d3 ♞xc3 18 bxc3**



The latest trade leaves White with hanging pawns in the centre rather than the lone IQP but, essentially, the respective plans are the same. White seeks activity, while Black hopes to steer the game to an ending, where his structural advantages will be at their most significant. Black could be forgiven for believing that the removal of half the minor pieces, the blocking knight and sound pawn formation might combine to herald the beginning of a new, more positional phase of the game. In fact the diagram position is quite dangerous for him.

**18...♜ac8**

A typical reaction in what appears to be a respite from the pressure, Black immediately turning his attention to the new weakness on c3. 18...♜a4 is not without purpose. Now the presence of the queen on the d-file, accompanied by White's rook, allows a thematic thrust of the hitherto isolated d-pawn.

**19 d5!**

Now we see why Wells likes ♜h3. The d7-square is a natural post for Black's queen, leaving d8 free for a rook, addressing ♙g5, adding to Black's influence on the light squares etc. But the advance with d4-d5 can leave the black queen dominated by its oppo-

site number in view of the pin on the h3-c8 diagonal. Add the equally unpleasant pin on the d-file after 19...♙xd5 20 c4, and the d-pawn becomes a key factor.

**19...♜fe8**

Not surprisingly 19...♜xc3? runs into trouble: 20 dxc6 ♜c7 (20...fxe6? 21 ♙xg6) 21 ♙d2 ♜c6 (21...♜b3 22 ♙b4 ♜c8 23 ♙xg6! ♜xh3 24 exf7+) 22 ♙b4 ♜e8 23 ♙xg6 hxg6 24 ♙d7.

**20 ♙f1!**

This grandmasterly mix of attack and defence appears perfectly simple here, but to have considered the retreat of a normally active piece beforehand is why the '!' is tagged on. Clearing the d-file introduces the threat of d5xe6; meanwhile g2 is given extra protection, just in case, while in some lines White can send both rooks into action without fearing checks on the back rank.

**20...♜a4 21 ♙d4**

White, understandably, wishes to open the game, although 21 d6 could be awkward for Black.

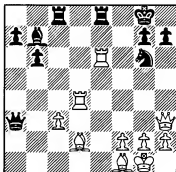
**21...♜a5**

Black is more interested in monitoring the g5-bishop than taking on a3. 21...♜xa3 22 dxe6 fxe6 23 ♜xc6 is playable for Black, if a little unattractive.

**22 dxe6! fxe6**

22...♜xg5 23 exf7+ ♜xf7 24 ♙d7+ ♜g8 25 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 26 ♜xb7.

**23 ♙d2 ♜xa3 24 ♜xe6**





Compared with the note to Black's 21st move White's bishop now stands less menacingly on d2, although at least c3 is defended. For the moment Black's superior queenside is less significant than White's initiative elsewhere.

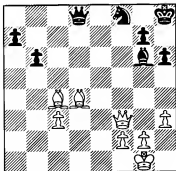
24...♟f8 25 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 26 ♖h5 ♖e7 27 h3

Preparing to return the f1-bishop, an escape square is created for the king.

27...♞e4

Coming to the aid of the kingside.

28 ♞b5 ♞g6 29 ♖f3 ♞d8 30 ♞c4+ ♟h8  
31 ♞xd8 ♖xd8 32 ♞e3 h6 33 ♞d4



Notice how the exchange of all rooks has failed to alleviate the pressure under which Black has suffered thus far. A queen often works well with the bishop pair in circumstances such as we have in the diagram position because this versatile piece is able to switch from one colour complex to another. The bishops dominate to such an extent that Black's queenside majority is useless while his kingside is under fire.

33...♖e7 34 ♖d5 ♞h7

Black is too passive.

35 ♖c6

Now ♖xh6 is on.

35...♞g6 36 ♖d5 ♞h7 37 f4!

So we see that White's pawn majority is much more effective. A further push to f5 keeps Black out of g6, while the prospect of the pawn reaching f6 – seriously undermin-

ing what little cover Black has of the dark squares – is a major problem. Unfortunately prolonged defence – and the promise of the coming offensive – now induced a decisive error from Black.

37...♖e1+ 38 ♟h2 ♖e4??

38...♖e7 is forced, when a possible continuation is 39 ♖c6 ♖d7 40 ♖xh6 ♖xd4 41 ♖xh7+ ♟xh7 42 cxd4 a5 43 d5 a4 44 d6 etc.

39 ♞xg7+! 1-0

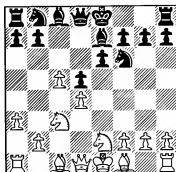
Mate is unavoidable.

### Game 10

### Suvrajit-Venkatesh

Indian Championship 2003

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟c3 ♞b4 4 e3 c5 5  
♟e2 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 a3 ♞e7 8 c5



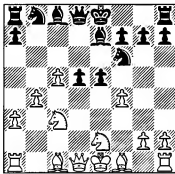
8 ♟f4 0-0 is dealt with in Deep Sjeng-Fritz (Game 12), while 8 cxd5 ♟xd5 9 ♟xd5 ♖xd5 10 ♟c3 ♖d8 is equal. By advancing the c-pawn White sets about stealing territory on the queenside with the intention of generating an advantage there through early expansion, hoping to hold Black down by keeping the centre closed. It is around this last part of the plan that the game tends to revolve, for White's strategy is also rather committal because his fixed centre is now potentially vulnerable to the thematic central break characterised by ...e6-c5.

8...a5

The most natural and popular response to c4-c5 is the immediate 8...b6, which we investigate in detail below, and to which the text tends to transpose because the queenside is currently where the action is taking place, and both ...b7-b6 and ...a7-a5 are sure to figure. Ignoring White's coming queenside advance and looking to the centre for a quick counter with 8...♖c6 gives White a comfortable edge after 9 b4 e5 10 dxe5 ♖xe5 11 ♖d4 0-0, e.g. 12 ♖e2 a5 13 ♖b1 axb4 14 axb4, as in Gligoric-Broadbent, Birmingham 1951.

Now we turn our attention to 8...b6 9 b4 (taking on b6 leaves White with an isolated, fixed target on d4, also opens lines for Black and loses time). Transpositions are common in these lines because in the main game Black plays an immediate ...a7-a5xb4, so you will find in the variations below examples in which the trade is delayed or avoided (by White or Black), while there are other alternatives to the main line.

Quite different is 9...bxc5 10 dxc5 e5, releasing Black's centre pawns and giving the threat of hitting the knight with ...d5-d4 more weight because by holding back the a-pawn Black rules out ♖a4-b6. In fact the recommended counter for White is the brave 11 f4



With a couple of knights 'developed' and a hat full of pawn moves we would expect White to get some more pieces out, but this thrust contests the centre, in particular the

d4-square. I rather like White's prospects in the diagram position.

11...♖c6 is rather provocative, inviting White to try a refutation with 12 ♖a4 ♖d7 13 b5, when Ragozin-Cherepkov, Leningrad 1957 saw Black generate considerable pressure for the sacrificed material after 13...♖c8 14 fxe5 ♖xe5 15 ♖d4 0-0 16 ♖xe5 ♖xc5 17 ♖g5 ♖e8 18 ♖xf6 gxf6 19 ♖f4 (19 ♖xd5 ♖a5 20 ♖d2 ♖b6) 19...♖e3 20 ♖g3+ ♖h8 and White was a knight up but Black had all his pieces in play. I wouldn't be surprised if White's play could be improved after 12 ♖a4. Perhaps the greedy 14 bxc6 ♖xc6 15 ♖d1 is worth a try, e.g. 15...d4 16 fxe5 dxc3 17 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18 exf6 ♖xf6, although the c3-pawn could be a nuisance. Anyway, White also has 12 fxe5 ♖xc5 13 ♖d4 0-0 14 ♖e2 with the superior pawn structure. Zilberman-Cherepkov, USSR 1963 continued 14...♖c4 15 ♖xe4 dxe4 16 0-0 ♖f6 17 ♖e3 when White's majority was looking promising. Consequently Black jumped in with 17...♖d3, practically forcing the thematic exchange sacrifice 18 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖xd3 exd3 20 ♖xd3 with an interesting game ahead.

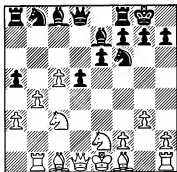
11...a5? has been suggested but then 12 fxe5 axb4 (12...♖g4 13 ♖xd5) 13 exf6 ♖xf6 14 ♖xd5 looks decisive, e.g. 14...♖a5 15 ♖e4 ♖e6 16 ♖xf6+ gxf6 17 ♖d6, or 14...♖xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♖xa1 16 ♖c7+ ♖d8 17 ♖xa8 b3 18 ♖g5+ f6 19 ♖f4 ♖e8 20 ♖d2 etc.

Rubinstein-Maroczy, Hamburg 1930 was fun: 11...d4 12 fxe5 dxc3 13 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 (perhaps 13...♖xd8 followed by castling improves) 14 exf6 ♖xf6 15 ♖e3 ♖c6 16 0-0-0+ was good for White.

In reply to the less ambitious 10...0-0 White tends to set up the kingside fianchetto (see below), but 11 ♖f4, concentrating on the centre, is another option. Then Torre-Rec, Bangalore 1981 continued 11...♖c6 12 ♖d4 ♖xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♖d7 14 ♖g3 ♖b7 15 ♖d2, when 15...a5 looks logical, softening up

the queenside while White is lagging behind in development. Instead there followed 15...♔g5 16 f4 ♕f6 17 ♔d3 e5 18 fxe5 ♖xe5 19 0-0 with an advantage to White that was increased after 19...♗c4 20 ♔xc4 dxc4 21 ♔d6.

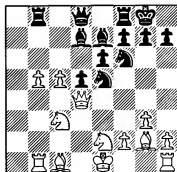
However, the position in the following diagram tends to be reached, through various combinations of moves, for example 8...b6 9 b4 bxc5 10 dxc5 0-0 11 g3 a5 12 ♖b1:



If Black is in a fighting mood, then this is perhaps the position to aim for rather than the order used in the main game. Of course if there is a specific plan involved in which ...axb4 plays a role it shouldn't make too much difference but, since b4-b5 can be played only at Black's invitation (and to Black's advantage if White is too keen) it is logical for the second player to reserve the choice for himself, if only to keep White guessing. Here 12...axb4 13 axb4 transposes to the main game, and a subsequent 13...♗c6 to the note to Black's 13th move. Black has also opted to do without ...axb4 in favour of the immediate 12...♗c6. White is invited to bypass the a5-pawn with 13 b5? but this is wrong in view of 13...♗e5, threatening to pick up the c-pawn as well as mate on f3. Instead after 13 ♔g2 Black can again try to exploit the stand-off on the queenside, 13...♖b8 presenting White with a collection of options to choose from, each of which subjecting White to some kind of discomfort:

14 b5 is probably the first move that springs to mind. 14...♔xc5! 15 bxc6 ♖xb1 16 ♖xb1 ♗b6 has been seen more than once. Black had ample compensation in Myc-Macieja, Biala Podlaska 1994, for example, which continued 17 ♖bc3 ♔xf2+ 18 ♗f1 ♗g4 19 h3?! (19 ♗d3 improves) 19...♗e3+ 20 ♔xe3 ♗xe3 21 ♗c1 ♗xc1+ 22 ♖xc1 ♔xg3 with three pawns and good play for the piece.

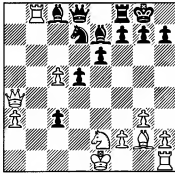
14 ♗a4 is another aggressive move, although after 14...axb4 15 ♗xc6? ♔d7 White is in trouble, which leaves 15 axb4 ♔d7 16 b5 ♗e5 17 ♗d4



Here the flashy but effective 17...♔xc5! 18 ♗xe5 ♔xf2+ 19 ♗f1 ♔a7, as in Lugovoi-Womacka, Hamburg 2001 has been suggested, but Black can also approach the middlegame with confidence by following the example set in D.Gurevich-Chow, Toronto 1998, which went 17...♗c4 18 c6 e5 19 ♗d3 ♔e6 with good play in the centre in reply to White's queenside pawns. Perhaps the combination of the uncompromising nature of 17...bxc5 and the fact that Gurevich went on to win this game against a considerably lower rated opponent has drawn people to the sacrifice, but after the subsequent 20 0-0 d4 21 ♗e4 ♗xe4 22 ♔xe4 f5 23 ♔g2 ♗d6 Black stood better in my opinion.

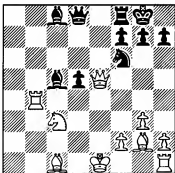
14 ♔f4?! is intended to meet 14...e5?! with 15 ♗xd5, but Black has 14...axb4! 15 ♔xb8 bxc3. According to M.Gurevich White

should then settle for 16 ♔d6 with a slight disadvantage after the nifty queen manoeuvre 16...♗xd6 17 cxd6 ♖a5! 18 0-0 ♖xa3 19 ♖c2 ♗xd6. In Salov-M.Gurevich, Leningrad 1987 White was on the wrong side of active play after 16 ♖a4 ♗xb8 17 ♗xb8 ♔d7!



Now 18 ♗b1 ♔xc5 is very nice for Black, e.g. 19 ♖c2 (or 19 ♖d4? c2) 19...♗a6, so the game went 18 ♗a8 ♔xc5 19 ♖b5 (19 ♖d4 ♖b6! 20 ♔xc3 ♖b7! 21 ♗a5 ♔b3; 19 ♖c2 d4) 19...♗d6! 20 ♗f3 ♗a6 21 ♗xf8+ ♗xf8 22 ♖a5 (22 ♖b1 ♔d3+ 23 ♔f1 ♖c5) 22...♔d3+ 23 ♔f1 ♔e5 24 ♖xc3 (24 ♔g2 ♔xf3 25 ♔xf3 d4) 24...d4 25 ♖b3 ♗c4 and it was time for White to throw in the towel in view of 26 ♖b7 ♔xf3 27 ♖xf3 ♗d5 etc.

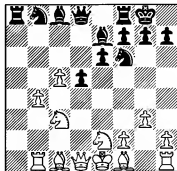
I prefer the more sober 14 ♔d4!? ♔xd4 15 ♖xd4 when 15...axb4 16 ♗f4 is unclear, while the entertaining 16 axb4 e5!? 17 ♖xe5 ♗xb4! 18 ♗xb4 ♗xc5



19 0-0 (19 ♖b8?? ♖c7+) 19...♗xb4 20 ♔xd5 somehow hoovers up enough pawns and pieces to leave the game completely level. In Marin-Portisch, Szirak Interzonal 1987 Black preferred 15...♔d7 16 0-0 ♗a6 17 ♗d1 ♗f6 18 ♖d2 axb4 19 axb4 ♔e5, and now Marin's proposed 20 ♖h1!? followed by f2-f4 is unclear, improving on the game's 20 ♖c2?! (20 b5 ♔c4 21 ♖c2 ♗xc3 22 bxa6 ♗xb1 23 ♖xb1 ♖a5 looks a shade better for Black) 20...♔c6! 21 ♗a3 (21 b5 ♗xc3) 21...♔d4 22 ♖d2 ♗c4.

Returning to the position after 8...a5, Black's intention in the game (and the following notes) is to tidy up the queenside a little with the trade on b4.

**9 ♗b1 b6 10 b4 axb4 11 axb4 0-0 12 g3 bxc5 13 dxc5**



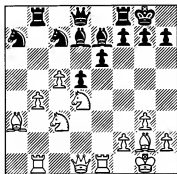
An important position, to which we could have transposed quite easily via our earlier examples. Both sides' strengths are also their potential weaknesses in that they have come about for a price. White has already been given two passed pawns and must not be given the time and circumstances with which to successfully organise their march down the board. In return Black has an impressive pawn duo of his own in the centre, a sector that has been to some extent surrendered by White in his quest to overrun his opponent on the queenside. Given the opportunity Black will steam-roll down the middle, behind the pawns, hoping that the subsequent

control of the centre will facilitate operations across the board. These same points, remember, should be taken into consideration with pawns still on a3 and a5. Also significant, as we have already seen, is the location of White's king.

**13...♙a6!?**

In the event of 13...♘c6 14 ♙g2 ♞b8 note that 15 b5 ♙xc5 16 bxc6 ♞xb1 17 ♘xb1 ♞b6, as in Holm-Nielsen, Nykobing 1961, is almost identical to Myc-Macieja in the note to Black's 8th move, but here the pawns are missing from a3 and a5. However, this time the trade on b4 presents White with the option of defending with 15 ♙a3. Then 15...♘a7? 16 b5! ♘d7 17 ♞a4 sets up a queen 'sacrifice' after 17...♘xc5 18 ♞xa7 ♞b7 19 ♙xc5 ♞xa7 20 ♙xa7, when Timofeev-Lopushnoy, Tula 1999 continued 20...♙b7 21 0-0 ♙d6 22 ♞fc1 ♞e7 23 ♙c3 ♞a8 24 b6, and White was definitely getting the better of the deal.

With 15...♙d7 16 0-0 ♘a7 Black plans to form a blockade on b5 (as is the case with 16...♘e8 17 ♞c2 ♘c7 18 ♞fd1 ♘a7 etc.), 17 ♞c1 ♘e8 18 ♘d4 ♘c7 making absolutely sure.



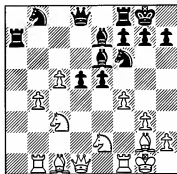
Hansen recommends dropping the bishop back to c1 here in anticipation of coming under attack from a knight on b5, and with a view, perhaps, to a more active relocation on f4. This does make sense, and another interesting option is 19 ♘a4 to answer Black's

efforts to win b5 with an outpost on b6. 19...♙f6 20 ♘b6 e5 21 ♘f3 ♙f5 22 ♞a1 ♘c6 was unclear in Panczyk-Pokojuwicz, Polish Championship 1986.

I like 15...♙a6!? 16 0-0 ♙c4 which plants the bishop firmly in enemy territory and even helps protect the d5-pawn in preparation for ...e6-e5 etc. After 17 ♞e1 Black has three quite decent options in 17...♞c7 (18 ♘d4 ♞fd8), 17...♘d7 and the direct 17...♞a8!?, when D.Gurevich-Whitehead, New York 1987 saw Black get his money's worth following 18 ♙c1 ♘g4 19 ♘f4 ♘xf2! 20 ♙xf2 ♘xb4 21 ♙e3 ♞a5.

13...♘a6 is not obvious, 14 ♘d4 ♙d7 15 ♙xa6 ♞xa6 16 b5 ♞a8 17 c6 e5 18 cxd7 exd4 19 ♞xd4 ♞xd7 20 0-0 being an edge for White in Grotnes-Poulsen, Norway 1994, but White must also be prepared for 14...♘xb4?! 15 ♙xb4 ♙xc5, when the subsequent 16 ♙b5 ♞c7 17 ♙c3 ♙xd4 18 ♞xd4 e5 19 ♞c5 ♞a1+ 20 ♘d1 ♙g4 21 ♙c2 left Black with insufficient compensation in Evans-Pilnik, Lone Pine 1975.

13...e5 is premature, e.g. 14 ♙g2 ♙e6 15 0-0 ♞a7, Sitnik-Illijin, Bled 2000, which provided another example of the positionally oriented 16 f4!?



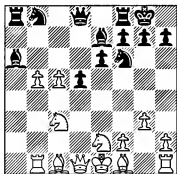
White secured an advantage after 16...exf4 17 ♙xf4 ♞d7 18 ♘d4.

Black's choice in the game is aimed at sorting out a role for the bishop (a more active – and therefore potentially more useful

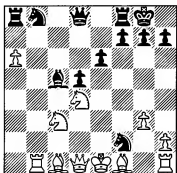
– piece) before the knight.

#### 14 ♖g2

White is (wisely) interested only in completing development. Clearly Black was prepared to part with this bishop in the event of 14 b5?!

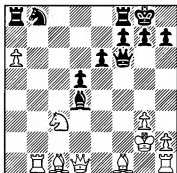


14...♗xc5!, when the attack on the second bishop with 15 ♖a4?! falls short: 15...♞a5+ 16 ♗d2 ♗xf2! 17 ♖xf2 ♖e4+ 18 ♖e1 ♖xd2 19 ♗xd2 ♞xa4 and now 20 bxa6 runs into 20...♞e4! so White's best is 20 ♖c3 ♞a3 21 bxa6 ♖xa6 with the easier game for Black. Therefore Grotnes-Bern, Norwegian Championship 1992 went 15 bxa6 ♖g4 16 ♖d4 ♖xf2!



This blow has more punch than 16...♞f6?! 17 ♞xg4 ♗xd4 18 ♖d1, when White is on the back foot but will soon castle into safety, the consequent alleviation of pressure affording the extra piece a more positive role than

is usually the case in these lines. The diagram position, on the other hand, tells a different story, Black chipping away at the king and adding to his collection of pawns. There followed 17 ♖xf2 ♞f6+ 18 ♖g2 ♗xd4



19 ♖xd5 (19 ♖b5? ♞f2+ 20 ♖h3 ♞f5+) 19...exd5 20 ♗d3 with a big advantage to Black that would have been cemented with Hansen's suggestion of 20...♞xa6, e.g. 21 ♗xa6 ♞f2+ 22 ♖h3 ♞f5+ 23 ♞g4 ♞xb1 24 ♞xd4 ♞f5+ and ...Nax6.

It seems from the examples above that White can easily find himself under pressure if he allows Black to execute sacrifices aimed at clearing lines and exploiting the development lead. Black can also use the initiative in these lines to aim for more steady situations involving a formidable pawn mass in the ending.

#### 14...♗c4 15 0-0 ♖a6

Monitoring the b4-pawn from a6 rather than c6 means that b4-b5 is not on due to ...♖xc5, while the possibility of later covering the b5-square with the knight on c7 rather than a7 is also preferable.

#### 16 ♗f4 ♖h5?!

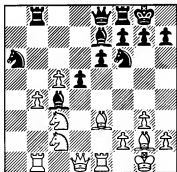
White can be content with his bishop on either f4 (covering b8) or e3 (supporting c5), whereas this knight will obviously have to return to f6.

#### 17 ♗e3 ♞e8

I'm not sure about this move, which further reduces the support of the d5-pawn

(Black should be constantly looking to achieve counterplay with ...e6-e5, and the knight on b5 is no help) but does keep an eye on b5 and rules out the fork on c6 that might otherwise be an issue after Qd4 (I doubt Black was planning ...f7-f5).

18 ♖e1 ♖b8 19 Qd4 Qf6 20 Qc2



White hopes that his pieces will combine to offer sufficient control of the centre in order to keep Black at bay while engineering something positive on the queenside.

20...e5?!

20...Qc7 brings to four the number of pieces in control of the important b5-square, but this is illusory and after the plausible continuation 21 ♖f4 ♖b7 22 Qa3! Black seems better off retreating the bishop to a6 with a slight edge for White than actually using b5, as 22...Qb5 23 Qaxb5 ♖xb5 24 Qxb5 ♖xb5 25 ♖f1 followed by ♖c3 should see White succeed in breaking the blockade.

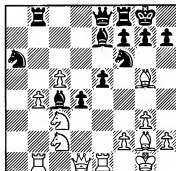
20...♖b7 looks sensible. Instead the ambitious text tempts White into picking off the d5-pawn, and Black's decision might have been based on psychological reasons.

21 ♖g5

21 Qxd5 ♖xd5 22 ♖xd5 Qxc5! offers Black good chances of equality in view of 23 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 24 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 25 bxc5 ♖xb1 26 ♖xb1 Qd7 etc. However, White can get away with 21 ♖xd5!, when 21...Qxd5 22 Qxd5 ♖xc5 is different because White has

23 Qf6+ gxf6 24 ♖g4+ ♖h8 25 ♖h6 ♖g8 26 ♖xc4. But White was probably uncomfortable with 21...♖d8, which is a common and understandable fear experienced by us all at some time. In fact 22 ♖xc4 ♖xd1 23 ♖bxdl Qc7 looks very nice for White's larger army, the connected passed pawns guaranteed to add to the investment.

21...d4



The point.

22 ♖xe5

22 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 23 Qc4 ♖e7 is about even.

22...dxc3 23 ♖xf6 ♖e6?

Quite odd. Now after...

24 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 25 ♖d4 ♖f6 26 ♖xc3 ♖f5 27 ♖e3 ♖xc2 28 ♖xc2 Qxb4 29 ♖e4 Qa6 30 ♖xb8 Qxb8 31 c6

...Black was a pawn down for nothing, resigning five moves later... 1-0.

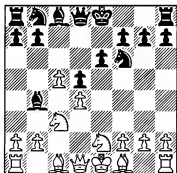
This is a disappointing end to the game, which should have continued 23...gxf6 24 ♖g4+ ♖h8 25 ♖xc4 fxe5 26 ♖xa6 (26...♖xc5 27 ♖f6+ ♖g8 28 ♖g5+ draws) or 25 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 26 ♖xc4 Qxc5 27 ♖e1 Qe6 28 ♖xc3, with compensation for White in both cases.

This variation with 7...♖e7 8 c5 leads to interesting queenside versus centre struggles in which both sides must be careful in order to avoid being overrun. Depending on style, some players might feel uncomfortable on either side of the board, while others will even enjoy dealing with the numerous pit-

falls.

*Game 11*  
**Sherbakov-Mitenkov**  
*Russian Championship 1995*

1 d4 d6 2 c4 e6 3 c3 b4 4 e3 c5 5  
 d2 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 c5



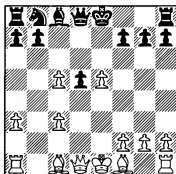
This time White goes for immediate expansion rather than give Black the choice of deciding how the pawn formation looks after 7 a3. White anticipates that a couple of sets of minor pieces will be exchanged (Black can keep his dark-squared bishop in the game by bringing it round to c7 but this does use up precious time), after which the combination of the remaining pieces and the structure (which tends to afford White a space advantage) should come into play.

The obvious drawback to this variation is that it is rather committal, while a tempo is spent at a time when the pin is still in place, affording Black what seem to be viable alternatives to the main line (which is far from clear).

**7...d2**

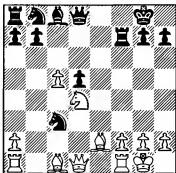
Concentrating on exploiting the pin. However, there is an interesting possibility in contesting the centre immediately with the uncompromising 7...e5, a pawn break that might later prove difficult to organise once White is better established. If you are a Nimzo player and the main lines don't appeal

to you, then this thrust looks okay, although – as is often the case with such bursts of activity – Black tends to emerge with little by way of winning chances. For example after 8 dxe5 d2 9 a3 dxc3 10 dxc3 dxc3+ 11 bxc3 we reach the following position:



Now both 11...a5 12 b3 0-0 13 d2 d7 14 d3 dxc5 15 0-0, Vaissier-Psakhis, Nimes 1991 and 11...d6 12 b5 a5 13 dxc6+ bxc6, Muir-Turner, British Championship 2002 are typical, with White only very slightly better, if anything, yet Black having to be satisfied with the likely outcome of a draw.

More combative is 8...d4 9 d4 0-0, the gambit approach aimed at profiting from White's development lag. Then 10 e6 d6 11 exf7+ xf7 12 d2 d4 13 0-0 dxc3 14 bxc3 dxc3 has been played:



Now it is White's turn to put pieces be-



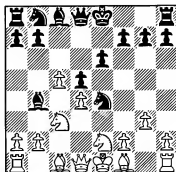
fore the points score in the list of priorities, the point being that Black's two advanced pieces will have been traded in for the return of the pawn after the capture on e2. Morovic Fernandez-Browne, Linares 1994 went 15 ♖c2 ♖xc2+ 16 ♗xe2 ♖a6 17 c6 bxc6 18 ♖xc6 ♗f6 19 ♖e5 ♗e7 20 ♗e1 ♖b4 21 ♖b2 with the easier game for White. White was less successful when recapturing on e2 with the knight in Onischuk-Browne, Las Vegas 2001, this time Browne finding himself with sufficient chances after 15 ♗d2 ♖xc2+ 16 ♖xe2 ♖c6 17 ♖b2 b6 18 ♗ac1 ♖a6 19 ♗fe1 ♖c4 etc.

Returning to the position after 7...e5, White can also react to the challenge with one of his own on the dark squares, 8 a3 ♖xc3+ 9 ♖xc3 exd4 10 ♗xd4 temporarily obstructing the isolated, passed pawn and accentuating his grip on the dark squares. Then 10...0-0 (10...♖c6 11 ♖b5 0-0 12 ♖xc6 bxc6 13 0-0 favours White) 11 ♖b5 ♖d7 12 0-0 ♖xb5 13 ♖xb5 ♖c6 is sensible, featuring in a number of other games of Browne. 14 ♗d3 ♖e4 15 ♖e3 ♖e5 16 ♗d4 ♖c6 is again indicative of how after 7...e5 the course of the game is in some way dependent on White's willingness or otherwise to work beyond the early middlegame. 17 ♗d1 a6 18 ♖c3 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♗e8 20 ♗b1 ♗c7 21 ♖f4 ♗d7 22 ♖d6 probably looked better for White than is really the case in Krush-Browne, San Francisco 1999, 22...♗f6 a possible improvement over the game's 22...♗a5 23 ♗g4. Here 17 ♗a4 has been recommended, Hansen giving Pliester's evaluation of slightly better for White after the subsequent 17...♗e7 18 ♗ac1. However, the same position after 17 ♗a4 was reached in Krush-Browne, Parsippany 1999 but without the repetition, so we actually join the game after White's 15th move. Rather than hit the c-pawn again with the queen, Black forced the issue with 15...d4! so that after 16 ♖xd4 ♖xc5 17 ♗c4 ♖xd4 18 ♖xd4 ♖e6 19 ♖c3 the game had been tidied up to leave White

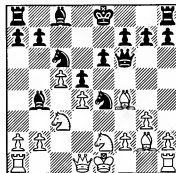
with the superior, long-range minor piece but Black with no weaknesses – no realistic means with which to apply pressure, either, but healthy drawing prospects nonetheless.

## 8 ♖d2

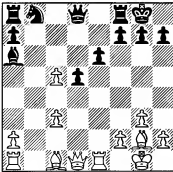
Universally played, it seems, but there is also 8 g3!



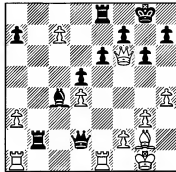
This might seem both slow and quite unrelated to what has happened thus far on the other flank, but because Korchnoi tried it (with success) it deserves a look. Before enjoying Korchnoi-Sakaev, St Petersburg 1997 it is important to investigate the obvious response, namely 8...♗f6, when 9 f4 shuts out the queen and clamps down on e5 but at the cost of leaving behind weaknesses. This leaves 9 ♖f4, tempting Black into 9...g5 10 ♖c3 ♗f3 11 ♗g1, which is simply unclear. Instead Psakhis gives the continuation 9...♖c6 10 ♖g2



White's position is beginning to slot into place, and now the brief flurry beginning 10...♞xd4 11 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 12 ♞xd4 ♞xc3 turns out in his favour after 13 ♞c2 ♞xa2+ 14 ♖e2! ♞xc5 15 ♞xa2 in view of the layout of the extra pawns and White's well placed pieces. I doubt even Sakaev saw this when facing 8 g3, but anyway the game continued 8...0-0 9 ♞g2 b6 10 0-0 ♞xc3 (10...♞xc3!? 11 bxc3 ♞a5 12 c4 ♞a6 is possible) 11 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 12 bxc3 ♞a6 13 ♞e1 bxc5 (13...♞c4!) 14 dxc5



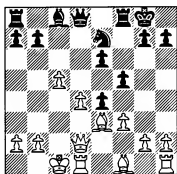
Typical Korchnoi. Somewhere along the line here White decided not to concern himself with structure, the focus being piece play and the dark squares. The passed c5-pawn is also stronger than it looks. There followed 14...♖a5 15 ♞e3 (not 15 ♞xd5? exd5 16 ♖xd5 ♞b5! 17 ♖xa8 ♞c6). Now 15...♞d7 is dealt impressively by Psakhis, who offers 16 ♞d4 ♞xc5 17 ♖g4 g6 18 ♖h4 ♞d7 19 ♖e7 ♖d8 (19...e5 20 ♞xe5!) 20 ♞xe6!, with a clear advantage, as a good example of Black's potential problems on the dark squares. The game continued 15...♞c6 16 ♖g4 ♞c4 (16...♞e5? 17 ♖b4 ♞c6!?) 17 ♞d4 ♞xd4 18 cxd4 ♞ab8 19 ♖f4 ♞b2 20 a3 g6? (voluntarily weakening the dark squares when 20...h6? would have done just fine) 21 h4! ♖d2 22 ♖f6 ♞fb8 23 c6! (here it comes) 23...♞e8 (23...♖a5 24 ♞xe6! fxe6 25 ♞h3 ♞e8 26 ♞xc6+ ♞xe6 27 ♖xe6+ ♖g7 28 ♖e7+ ♖h6 29 c7 ♞a6 30 ♞e1 is decisive) 24 c7!



Black's queen and rook look threatening but White is calling the shots. 24...♞c2!? 25 ♞ad1 ♖a5 26 h5 ♖xc7 27 h6 ♖f8 28 ♞c3! takes us half-way through another piece of Psakhis analysis, White given the decision after 28...♞e2 29 ♞xd5! ♞xd1 30 ♞xe6 ♞e2 31 ♖g7+ ♖e7 32 ♞xf7+ ♞xc3 33 ♞xe8+ ♖d8 34 ♖xc7+ ♖xc7 35 fxe3 with a winning ending! Consequently Black sounded the retreat: 24...♖a5 25 h5! ♖xc7 26 h6 ♖f8 27 ♞e3 ♞c2 (27...♞c2 28 ♞h3! – 28 ♞xd5! – 28...♖c6 29 ♞e1) 28 ♞f3 and White went on to win the game. Definitely food for thought, particularly at club level, where 8 g3 and its potential will come as a surprise.

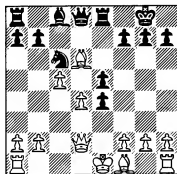
### 8...♞d2

The majority of players would choose this capture if presented with the position for the first time, but a couple of other moves are not without logic. One is 8...♞xc3!?, taking a knight for a bishop, rather than the other way round. Black figures that he will have to part with his bishop anyway at some point, so he might as well do so now and leave White's rather poorly placed on d2 after 9 ♞xc3, the point being that communication with the queen and the d-pawn is cut. After 9...♞c6 10 ♞xe4 dxe4 11 ♞e3! 0-0 12 ♖d2 f5 13 0-0-0 ♞e7 in Volkov-Aseev, St Petersburg 1998 White was ready to prise open the game with 14 f3



Then 14...exf3 15 gxh3 ♖d5 16 ♖b1 ♗xf3 17 ♔g2 and 16...f4 17 ♔f2 ♗xf3 18 ♔g1 offer White compensation. The game continued 14...♔d7 15 ♔c4 ♘d5 16 fxc4 fxe4 17 ♗he1 ♗e8 18 ♔g1 ♘f6 (18...♗g6 19 ♗c2 ♘f6 20 ♗b3) 19 d5! and White was making progress.

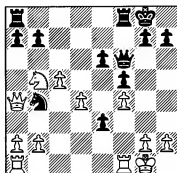
Instead of the attack on d4 Black might be better giving White a little rope with the patient 9...0-0!?, which can transpose to the previous example after 10 ♘xe4 dxe4 11 ♔e3 ♘c6 but invites White to send the bishop to the desirable looking outpost on d6: 11 ♔f4 (11 ♔c3 is another option, two plausible replies being 11...♘d7 followed ...♘f6 and 11...b6) 11...♘c6 12 ♔d6 ♗e8 13 ♗d2 e5!



The issue here is whether the advanced bishop is indeed a force to be reckoned with or, as Avrukh-Aseev, St Petersburg 1999

suggests, a piece that Black is able to ignore while he gets on with activity of his own. Now 14 d5?! ♘d4 not only gives Black a much superior attacking piece but also leaves the bishop trapped in enemy territory, susceptible to ...♘f5. Therefore White had to take on e5, 14 dxe5 ♘xe5 15 0-0-0 (15 ♔xe5 ♗xd2+ 16 ♖xd2 ♗xe5 17 ♗c1 ♔e6 favours Black) 15...♔g4?! (15...♗f6! 16 ♔b5 ♔f5! also looks good for Black because 17 ♔xe8? runs into 17...♘d3+ 18 ♖b1 e3 etc.) 16 ♗e1 ♔f5 highlighting which king is the better protected.

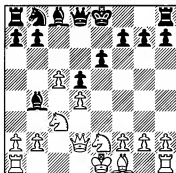
8...♘c6! also takes a look at the d4-pawn, although after 9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 ♔xb4 ♘xb4 11 ♘c3! Black should resist the urge to go in for 11...♗xd4?! 12 ♗xd4 ♘c2+ as 13 ♖d2 ♘xd4 14 ♘xe4 ♖e7 15 ♖c3 is already difficult for the second player, who has to contend with the weakness of the d6-square, White's expansion with f2-f4 and White's freer minor pieces. Bareev-Aseev, USSR Championship 1990 saw the variation 11...f5 12 ♔b5+ (12 ♗a4+ ♘c6) 12...♔d7 13 0-0 ♔xb5 14 ♘xb5 0-0 15 f3 e3 16 f4 ♗f6 17 ♗a4



This worked out well for White after 17...a6 18 ♘c7 e2 19 ♗f2 ♗xd4 (19...♘d3 20 ♘xa8 ♘xf2 21 ♖xf2 ♗xa8 22 ♖xe2) when Hansen's suggestion after 20 ♘xa8 ♗d2 21 ♗xe2 ♗xe2 22 ♗xb4 ♗xa8 23 ♗e1 ♗c2, given as unclear by Kharitonov, is that 24 ♗d4 leaves White 'solidly better' – you de-

side, but I'm going with Mr Hansen. White also has 20 ♖e1, e.g. 20...♗xc5 21 ♖xe6 ♗d5 22 ♗xb4 ♗xc6 23 ♚fxe2 (23...♗xa2?? 24 b3), again with a definite pull. Perhaps an improvement for Black after 17 ♗a4 is the immediate 17...c2!? 18 ♚fc1 (18 ♚f3?! ♖c6) 18 ..♖d3 19 ♚xe2 ♖xf4 when the backward pawns should cancel each other out and the position remains balanced.

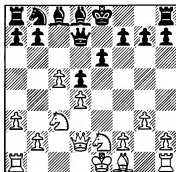
9 ♗xd2



While the diagram position is not strictly the starting point of this variation, it is nevertheless a key juncture in that White's general plan has now been established. The trade on d2 has tidied things up a bit, leaving White ready to continue on the queenside with the advance a2-a3 and further play in that sector, the closed nature of the centre, with the d4-pawn holding off Black's pawn duo, effectively negating Black's kingside pawn majority.

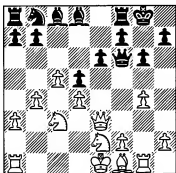
9...a5

Black has tried a host of 9th moves, none of which will replace the text as the main line. The following are worth noting. I was going to say that 9...♗d7 looks odd for those of you seeing it for the first time, but it will continue to look odd. The point is to provide the bishop with a new lease of 'life' via d8 in the event of the inevitable 10 a3, when Lautier already assesses the state of play after 10...♗a5 as unclear. Then comes 11 g3 ♗d8



Perhaps you should take a few moments to get used to Black's piece placement, and the fact that this is how numerous GMs have approached the opening. So, the rearrangement of Black's queen and bishop has been carried out because, given that Black has opted to keep his bishop, the c7-square is hardly appropriate in view of the inconvenient (for Black) ♖b5. A good example is the game Knaak-Skembris, Dortmund 1990, which now continued 12 ♖g2 a5!? 13 b3 (White doesn't want his pawns to be fixed after ...a5-a4 if this can be avoided) 13...b6 14 0-0 0-0 15 b4 ♗a6 and now Knaak proposes 16 ♚ab1 ♗c4 with chances for both sides, but in the game the affable grandmaster was able to justify the move ...♗d7 after the line 16 ♚fb1?! ♗xe2! 17 ♖xe2 ♗a7!, although disaster came when 18 ♖c3 ♗f6 19 ♖xd5! exd5 20 ♗xd5 was met not with 20...♖d7 21 c6! ♚ad8! but 20...axb4?? 21 cxb6 ♗a5 22 ♗xa8 ♗xa8 23 ♗xb4 ♖c6 24 b7 ♗a7 25 ♚c1! etc.

Another, more active looking way of vacating d8 for the bishop is with the move 9...♗f6: 10 a3 ♗a5 (if 10...♗xc3 then 11 ♖xc3 0-0 12 ♗b5! secures White an edge, e.g. 12...b6 13 b4 or 12...♗d7 13 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 14 b4 etc.) 11 b4 ♗d8 (11...♗c7? 12 ♖b5 ♗e7 13 ♖xc7+ ♗xc7 14 ♖c3 is quite poor for Black) 12 g3 ♗f3 13 ♚g1 ♗f6 14 ♗e3 0-0 15 g4 g6



16 g5 ♖g7 with a draw in Vaisser-Van der Wiel, Brussels Zonal 1993 is food for thought.

A different plan entirely is 9...b6, which doesn't even keep White guessing as to the future of the now 'trapped' bishop. After 10 a3 ♙xc3 11 ♗xc3 bxc5 (11...0-0 12 b4) 12 dxc5 a5 13 ♙b5+ ♙d7 14 0-0 White is a shade better, e.g. 14...a4 (14...0-0? ignored events on the queenside at Black's cost in Reshevsky-Najdorf, Dallas 1957, 15 b4 ♙xb5 16 ♗xb5 ♗a6 17 ♗d6 ♖d7 18 f4! spreading White's advantage across the board) 15 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 (15...♗xd7 16 ♖d4) 16 f4!, when Karsa-Dory, Hungarian Championship 1982 saw White maintain his lead after 16...d4 17 ♗c4 0-0 18 ♗d6 ♗c6 19 f5 exf5 20 ♖xf5.

The text also says goodbye to the bishop, but the idea is to establish the pawn on a4 before addressing the issue of the c5-pawn, which Black would prefer to deal with in his own time.

**10 a3 ♙xc3 11 ♗xc3 a4**

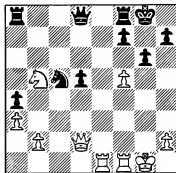
Fixing the queenside in order to disrupt communication, as White will no longer be able to support the c5-pawn with b2-b4 in view of ...a4xb3, resulting in a new target in the shape of White's a-pawn. 11...0-0? 12 ♗a4 ♙d7 13 ♗b6 ♖a7 14 ♙d3 ♗c6 15 0-0 failed to put any obstacles White's way in Yakovich-Frog, Russian Championship 1995. Then 15...♗xd4 16 ♙xh7+ ♗xh7 17 ♖xd4

doesn't help Black, although nor did 15...♙e8 16 ♙c2 ♖a6 17 ♖ad1 f6 18 ♖fe1 ♙f7 reduce White's advantage. Note that without Black's pawn lodged on a4 White is free to prepare b2-b4 at leisure.

**12 ♙d3**

I prefer this to the committal 12 f4. This push is by no means a must-play in this line yet there are other moves that certainly do have an appropriate role, so Black now has a tempo with which to make the f4-pawn look out of place, or even provoke White into an unjustified pawn storm on the kingside. For example 12...b6 13 ♙d3 bxc5 14 dxc5 0-0 15 ♖c1 ♖a5 16 ♗a2 ♙d7 17 ♖c3 ♖c8 18 ♖f2 ♙b5 19 ♗c1 ♗d7 helped only Black in Agzamov-Yudasin, USSR Championship 1981. Only now did White manage to castle, but 20 0-0 ♗f6 21 ♖c2 ♖ab8 22 ♖d4 ♗e4 left him worse.

Black also has 12...0-0 13 ♙b5 ♙d7 14 0-0 g6, when 15 ♖a1 ♙xb5 16 ♗xb5 ♗c6 17 ♖c3 ♖f6 18 ♖d3 ♖fb8 19 ♖f2 ♖a5 20 ♗c3 b6 put White under some pressure in Schmidt-Stempin, Prague Zonal 1985, but this is preferable from White's point of view to 15 ♖a1? ♙xb5 16 ♗xb5 b6 17 g4 bxc5 18 f5 exf5 19 dxc5 ♗a6 20 gxf5 ♗xc5

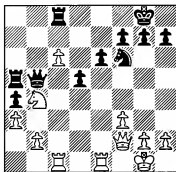


White's aggression had backfired in Miles-Short, Esbjerg 1984. If your opponent bangs out 12 f4 and seems to be in fighting mood, then you should help make up his mind and play 12...0-0.

## 12...♗d7

Black intends to challenge the c5-pawn with ...b7-b6 but keeps White in the dark rather than commit himself with the main line move 12...b6, to which the text can easily transpose after 13 cxb6 ♖xb6 14 ♖c2! (it is important to keep the bishop in play – 14 0-0! ♖c6! 15 ♗b5 ♗a6 16 ♖xc6+ ♖xc6 17 ♖fe1 0-0 18 ♖e3 ♖d7 19 ♖a1 ♖ac8 was equal in Shulman-Shaposhnikov, St Petersburg 1997) 14...♗d7 15 0-0 0-0 16 ♖fe1 etc.

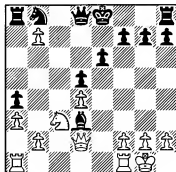
White also has 13 0-0, leaving Black to make a decision regarding the c5-pawn. Of course White is ready for 13...bxc5 14 dxc5 ♖a5 in view of 15 ♖a1, protecting c5 thanks to the skewer on the c-file. Miles-Torre, London 1984 is instructive: 15...0-0 16 ♖fe1 ♖d7 17 ♖c2 ♖f6 18 ♖a2 ♗a6 19 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 20 ♖b4 ♖b5 21 f3! (keeping the knight out of e4 and providing a useful outpost for the queen) 21...♖fc8 22 ♖f2 ♖a5 23 c6



Black is solid but White has the trump card on c6. Note how the knight on b4 both aids the passed pawn and blocks the b-file.

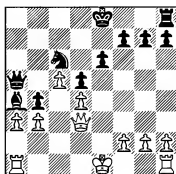
In the event of 13...♗a6 Hansen gives only Bagirov-Yusupov, USSR 1979, which led to a modest edge for White after 14 f4 bxc5 15 f5 0-0 16 dxc5 ♖d7 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 19 ♖xd5 ♖xc5 20 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 21 ♖f1 ♖d6 22 ♖f2 ♖a7, although he does suggest 15...cxd4!?, which looks like an improvement. However, there seems to be an

immediate (and bigger) improvement for White, in fact, in the shape of the direct 14 cxb6!, when 14...♖xb6? 15 ♖xa4 is practically decisive, while a cause of considerable unease for Black is 14...♗xd3 15 b7!



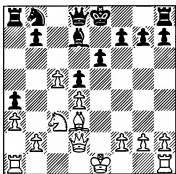
Play might continue 15...♖a5 16 ♖xd3 ♖b6 17 ♖c2 ♖xd4 18 ♖xa4 0-0 19 b4 and there will be no stopping White's passed pawns.

Finally there is 13 ♖xa4! ♖xa4 14 ♗b5+ ♗d7 15 ♗xa4 ♗xa4 16 ♖b4 b5! (16...♗d7? 17 cxb6 ♖e7 18 ♖c5 ♖xc5? 19 dxc5 ♖a6 20 b4 and the armada of pawns were sure to decide in Gulko-Kaunas, USSR 1983) 17 b3 ♖c6 18 ♖c3 b4 19 ♖d3 ♖a5



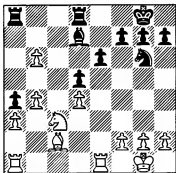
We are following Ziatdinov-Yudasin, USSR 1985. There is no doubt Black has been skating on thin ice thus far, but after 20 bxa4 b3+ 21 ♖e2 ♖xa4 22 ♖hd1 0-0 23 ♖c3 ♖b8 he was still holding on. I wouldn't be

surprised to see improvements.



### 13 0-0 b6

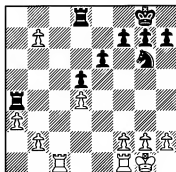
Standard. Black has also tried sending the knight around to e7 before touching his b-pawn, but this seems inadequate and can easily lead to a terrible ending for Black. After 13...dxc6 14 a2 d7 White has done well by placing either rook on e1. 15 f1 0-0 16 d1 a5 17 h5 f5 18 e3 f6 19 ae1 b6 20 c6 dxc6 21 xa4, Babula-Berzinsh, Czech Republic 1999 favoured White, who later converted a rook and good knight versus rook and bad bishop ending. Also poor for Black was Nenashev-Yudasin, Kemerovo 1995, which went 15...b6 16 g5! 0-0 17 cxb6 dg6 18 xd8 fxd8 19 b4!



19...axb3 20 xg6 hxg6 21 eb1 ddb8 22 xxb3 a6 23 ab1 and Black has an unenviable defensive task ahead.

Similarly, after 15 ae1 b6 (15...0-0 16

d1 a5 17 e3 gives White a nice attacking stance according to Shirov) 16 g5 0-0 17 cxb6 Black might be well advised to avoid 17...dg6? 18 xd8 fxd8, when the slightly different circumstances prompted White to get busy in Sherbakov-Ramesh, Linares 1996 with 19 b7 a7 20 xa4 xa4 21 dxa4 xa4 22 c1



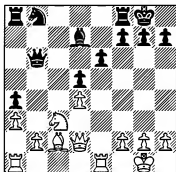
It is worth remembering this sacrifice and the potential of White's pawns on this wing. Meanwhile, we have seen nothing of Black's majority. The threat now is the deadly c8, which is why Black played 22...c4, when 23 b3 xc1 24 xc1 d7 25 a4 b8 26 c7 decided in White's favour in view of the coming advance of the a-pawn. 22...d7 has been suggested as an improvement, and is, but White is still in the driving seat, e.g. 23 c7 f8 24 f1 c4 25 1xc4 dxc4 26 a4 b8 27 a5 d6 28 c8+ e7 29 a6.

In J.Watson-Smith, Hawaii 1998 Black decided against ...b7-b6, but after 13...0-0 14 a2 a6 15 fe1 d7 16 e3 d6 17 g3 h8 18 e1 White's forces were gathering around the enemy king.

### 14 cxb6 xxb6 15 fe1 0-0

White can be crafty and leave the bishop on d3 as 15...xd4? runs into 16 xe6+! when Black must move his king – with an awful position – as taking the rook walks into a discovered check (on b5 or g6) that picks up the queen.

### 16 a2



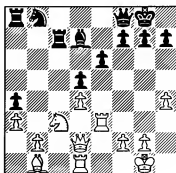
A popular position. Of course ...♗xd4 is still not on in view of ♔xh7+, but dropping back the bishop to c2 is anyway desirable as it serves to remind Black of the cost of fixing White's queenside – the a4-pawn is also fixed and will need constant protection. Additionally there is the new possibility of lining up on the b1-h7 diagonal with ♗d3 to bother Black's king. With no standard pawn break available to either side we should expect the pieces to take up leading roles and, with b2, d4 and a4 covered, both sides tend to be free to carry out their respective plans. Not surprisingly, with his pieces pointing in the right direction, and with a space advantage on the kingside, it is this sector where White is able to generate some pressure, a characteristic being swinging a rook over, via e3, to g3 and/or h3. With this in mind, despite the positional downside Black can find himself compromising his kingside pawns to such an extent that the majority loses its long-term power. Let us look at a few examples from the diagram position:

With 16...♗c8 Black intends to lodge the rook on c4, from where it can both hit the d4-pawn and offer extra protection to a4. Again 17 ♗c3 is a viable option, when 17...♗c4 18 ♗d1 ♕c6 19 ♕c2 ♕c7 20 ♗g3 ♗b8 21 h4 ♗d8 22 h5 gave White a pull in Schmidt-Mokry, Prague Zonal 1985. Notice how the b2-pawn is safe.

Also possible, and with similar intentions,

is 17 ♗ad1, e.g. 17...♗c4 18 ♔d3 ♗c8 19 ♗c3 ♕c6 20 ♗g3 ♖e7 21 h4 ♗d8, with what appears to be the expected slight yet menacing edge for White in Barceev-Dolmatov, Irkutsk 1986 after the further 22 ♗e1 ♖h8 23 ♗e5 f5.

Incidentally, here is a good illustration of how Black's endeavours to shore up the kingside can meet with trouble over on the opposite flank – after (17 ♗ad1) 17...♗d8?! 18 ♗c3 ♗f8 White continued as per plan in Knaak-Lerner, Lugano 1989, launching the h-pawn with 19 h4! but also keeping an eye on matters on the queenside after 19...♗c4 20 ♔d3 ♗c7 21 ♔b1!?

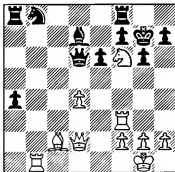


The point is to pounce on 21...♕c6? with 22 ♗c2 g6 23 ♕xa4. Instead the game went 21...♗b7 22 h5 ♕c6 and White got away with 23 ♕xa4! thanks to 23...♗xa4 24 ♗c2 ♗a8 25 ♗xh7+ ♖f8 26 ♗g3 and Black is struggling, Black having to settle for a clear disadvantage that resulted from 23...♕d4 24 ♗xd4 ♗xa4 25 b4 etc.

16...g6?! voluntarily weakens the defences. White's best response is with the standard 17 ♗c3!, which is enough for an advantage and can lead to some aggressive play on White's part. The sober line is 17...♗c8 18 ♗d1 ♔c6 (18...♗c4 19 ♗h3) 19 ♗f3! as in Lautier-Yudasin, Manila Interzonal 1990. White answered 19...♕d7?! with 20 ♗f4!, whereas the proposed 19...♗a7 (Lautier) sees White take up the attacking role after 20 h4 etc.



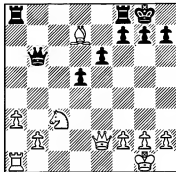
Now we turn to the less sober 17...♖xb2?  
 18 ♖b1 ♗xa3 19 ♜xd5 ♜d6 20 ♝f6+ ♚g7  
 21 ♜f3



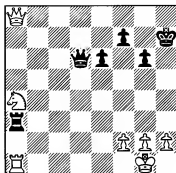
This position is considered excellent for White, and it does look much more attractive from White's side of the board (the nonsense ♜h5+ is coming). However, with the a-pawn running it is worth a brief investigation. For example after 21...a3 (or 21...e5 22 ♜h5+! gxf5 23 ♜g5+ ♚h8 24 ♜f6! ♜e7 25 ♜h6 e4 26 ♜xc4 etc.) 22 ♜h5+ gxf5 23 ♜g5+ ♚h8 24 ♜f6+ ♚g8 White, who has already invested a piece in the attack, needs to find the best follow-up... 25 ♖bb3! (25 ♜g3+? ♜xg3 26 hxg3 ♖a5 and the fight goes on) 25...e5! 26 ♜xd6 (26 ♜g3+ ♜g4) 26...a2 27 ♜h6 a1♖+ 28 ♖b1 ♜xb1+ 29 ♜xb1 f5 30 ♜g3+ ♝f7 31 ♜g7+ ♚e8 32 ♜d6 and White finally wins.

Black's recommended 16th move is 16...♜c6, facilitating development by making room for the knight on d7 while remaining in contact with the a4-pawn. Then 17 ♖e3 ♜d7 18 ♜g3 ♜fc8 19 h4 (Speelman) brings about the familiar kind of play and is an improvement on 19 ♖d1! ♜f8 20 h4 ♜c7, Speelman-Khalifman, Reykjavik 1991, which gave Black time to meet 21 h5 with the calm 21...h6! now that ♜xh6 would run into ...♜xg3.

16...♜c6? 17 ♜xa4 ♜xd4 18 ♜xd7 ♜b3 19 ♜e2 ♜xa1 20 ♖xa1 doesn't seem as good for White as it is supposed to be.



White has two pieces for the rook, and clearing away the a4-pawn has left the two passed pawns but Black is not without resources. For example Hansen gives the game Jelling-Berg, Silkeborg 1988, which continued 20...♖fb8 21 a4 ♜xb2 22 ♜xb2 ♖xb2 23 ♖c1 with an advantage, pointing out that the minor pieces hardly work in harmony. More recently Shulman-Shliperman, Parsippany 2001 produced an interesting draw: 20...d4!? 21 ♜a4 ♜d6 22 ♜b5 ♖fb8 23 b3 d3! 24 ♜xd3 ♖xb3 25 ♜xh7+ ♝xh7 26 ♜e4+ g6 27 ♜xa8 ♖xa3

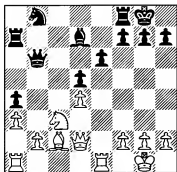


White is a whole knight up but the weak back rank and the pin are enough to earn Black a share of the point. After 28 ♖f1 ♜b4 29 ♜e8 ♚g7 the knight was trapped and the game agreed drawn. Returning to the position after 20...d4, White can also try 21 ♜c4. when 21...♖fb8 should meet with 22 ♖c1!

♙a7 (22...♗xb2?? 23 ♖c8+) 23 ♖b5 rather than 22 b4 ♗xb4 etc. 21 ♖d1 looks passive, but perhaps more patience is necessary. Anyway, these examples are indicative of how Black's major pieces can hinder White's advantage if not nullify it, suggesting that 16...♖c6?! is an inferior choice as opposed to a blunder.

### 16...♙a7

As we have already seen, Black's game tends to require more careful handling than White's in view of the fact that there is a good chance the middlegame (or at least part of it) will focus on Black's kingside, while there is also the a4-pawn to look after. The text, then, simply places the rook on the second rank in readiness for a defensive role there in the future, Black waiting to see what happens before committing himself further.



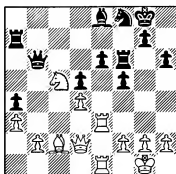
### 17 ♖ad1

It makes sense to offer the d4-pawn additional support.

### 17...♗d8

Unfortunately for Black a lack of defensive resources can lead to a rather ugly kingside complex, so the immediate 17...f5 has been tried here on the grounds that it could soon be necessary anyway so might as well be played on Black's terms. The consequent weakness of the e5-square is clearly a price to pay, but at least the e6-pawn is defended reasonably well, and Black is afforded a bit of breathing space. In Sherbakov-Meier, Par-

dubice 1996 White saw the voluntary advance of the pawn as helping select a strategy, which revolved around a nifty knight manoeuvre: 18 ♖e3 ♗d6 19 ♗de1 ♗f6 20 ♗g3 ♖c6 21 ♖c2 ♖d7 22 ♖f4 ♖f8 23 ♖d3 h6 24 ♗ge3 ♖c8 25 ♖c5 ♗b6



Black's structural problems are currently being held together by most of the defending army and, since both a4 and e6 are fixed weaknesses, only White can realistically expect to have winning chances. Of course it is one thing having a nice position and quite another finding an opportunity to exploit it, and here Black no longer has to fear falling foul of a kingside offensive. Consequently White looked to the other wing for a change of pace, forcing a trade of queens – 26 ♗b4! ♗xb4 27 axb4 ♙a8 (anticipating the inevitable assault on the a-pawn now that both ♙a1 and ♙a3 can do the job, Black prepares to switch to the b-file) 28 ♙a3 ♙b8 29 ♖xa4 ♖b5 30 ♖xb5 ♗xb5 31 ♖d3 ♖d7 32 ♙a7 ♖b8 33 ♖c1 and Black was in big trouble.

The queen retreat is also with defence in mind, covering g5.

### 18 ♖e3 g6 19 ♗f3 f5 20 ♙e1 ♗f6

From f6 the queen can monitor both the kingside and the d4-pawn, which Black now plans to attack with ...♖c6.

### 21 ♗d3

Nice. Often the best way to maintain an advantage is to take time out from your own strategy in order to frustrate those of your

opponent, and here the extra protection for d4 means that ... $\text{Qc6}$  would now drop the a4-pawn for nothing. Black's next tries another way to home in on d4.

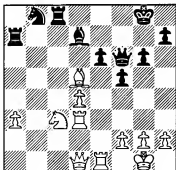
21... $\text{Nc8}$  22  $\text{Wd1}$

The a4-pawn is under fire.

22... $\text{Nc4}$  23  $\text{b3!}$

With his forces optimally placed there is no need for White to wait any longer, and this breakthrough makes more sense with Black's kingside compromised.

23... $\text{axb3}$  24  $\text{Axb3}$   $\text{Nc8}$  25  $\text{Axd5}$



No doubt White was building up to this.

25... $\text{exd5?}$

Two pieces are often a match for a rook and pawn(s) but this is not the case here. Nor should Black go in for 25... $\text{Nxc3}$  26  $\text{Axxc6+}$   $\text{Axe6}$  27  $\text{Nxc3}$  because what is left favours the major pieces. In fact Black's best is to ignore the pieces and remove a pawn with 25... $\text{Nxa3}$ , when 26  $\text{Ab3}$  still leaves White ahead as the d-pawn has increased in value because it can now advance, while the self-inflicted damage to Black's pawns takes on greater significance, with the e6-pawn a particular worry. Unfortunately for Black the coming alteration to the material landscape is his undoing, the open lines, vulnerability on the dark squares and White's passed pawns contributing to the final outcome.

26  $\text{Qxd5}$   $\text{Wd6}$  27  $\text{Qe7+}$   $\text{Ag7}$  28  $\text{Qxc8}$   $\text{Axc8}$  29  $\text{d5}$

There is nothing for the minor pieces to

bite on. White, on the other hand, has a choice of files down which to infiltrate.

29... $\text{Qa6}$  30  $\text{Nc3}$   $\text{Nc7}$

Did you notice that as well as the bishop White was threatening  $\text{Wd4+}$ , picking up the rook?

31  $\text{Wd4+}$   $\text{Af7}$  32  $\text{Nxc7+}$   $\text{Qxc7}$  33  $\text{Wh8!}$   $\text{Ad7}$  34  $\text{Wxh7+}$   $\text{Af8}$  35  $\text{Wh8+}$   $\text{Af7}$  36  $\text{Wh7+}$   $\text{Af8}$  37  $\text{Wh8+}$   $\text{Af7}$  38  $\text{Wb8}$   $\text{Qb5}$  39  $\text{Wd8}$   $\text{Qc7}$  40  $\text{Wb8}$   $\text{Qb5}$  41  $\text{Wd8}$   $\text{Qc7}$  42  $\text{a4}$

I suppose the clock was White biggest obstacle for the two episodes of repetition. On the board itself White's victory is a matter of time; Black could resign here.

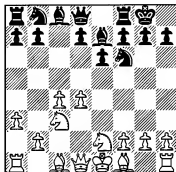
42... $\text{Qxd5}$  43  $\text{a5}$   $\text{Qf4}$  44  $\text{a6}$   $\text{Qe2+}$  45  $\text{Ah1}$   $\text{Wd2}$  46  $\text{Nf1}$   $\text{Wd4}$  47  $\text{Wc7}$   $\text{Wd3}$  48  $\text{Ne1}$  1-0

### Game 12

## DEEP SJENG-FRITZ

3rd CSVN Leiden 2003

1  $\text{d4}$   $\text{Qf6}$  2  $\text{c4}$   $\text{e6}$  3  $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Ab4}$  4  $\text{e3}$   $\text{c5}$  5  $\text{Qe2}$   $\text{cxd4}$  6  $\text{exd4}$  0-0 7  $\text{a3}$   $\text{Ae7}$



At first sight this seems rather accommodating because White can gain a considerable space advantage by pushing the d-pawn, but this, in fact, is part of Black's plan.

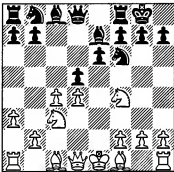
8  $\text{d5}$

8  $\text{g3}$   $\text{d5}$  9  $\text{c5}$   $\text{b6}$  10  $\text{b4}$  transposes to the game Suvrajit-Venkatesh (Game 10), whereas

9 cxd5 ♖xd5 10 ♖g2 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 ♖c6 12 0-0 is fine for Black, e.g. 12...♗d7 13 c4?! ♗a5 14 ♖b1 ♗xc4 15 ♖xb7 ♗a5 16 ♖b1 ♗c6 17 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 18 ♖a4 ♗d5 19 ♖e3 ♗f6 and White was equal at best in Pisakov-Smirnov, St Petersburg 2003.

White has a safe but sure alternative to 8 d5 in 8 ♖f4, when Black has a decision to make about his d-pawn. 8...d6 has been tried by Vladimir Milov recently (he has also played this with White), a couple of his games going 9 ♖e2 e5 10 ♗fd5 ♖xd5 11 ♖xd5 ♖c6. For example 12 ♖e3 ♖g5 13 0-0 ♖xe3 14 fxe3 ♗e6 15 ♖b4?! ♗e7 16 ♗d2 ♖c8 17 ♖ac1 was only slightly worse for Black in W.Arencibia-V.Milov, Merida 2002. In Chernushevich-V.Milov, Besancon 2003 White played 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♖e3 ♖g5 14 0-0 ♖xe3 15 fxe3?! rather than the automatic recapture with the knight, which would allow Black a nice outpost of his own on d4. In return for the isolated pawn White was able to accentuate his space advantage, earning a clear lead after 15...♗e6 16 ♗d2 ♗h4 17 ♖ad1 ♖ac8 18 b4 ♖fd8 19 ♗b2 ♖d7 20 b5 ♗a5 21 b6 axb6 22 ♗xe5 etc.

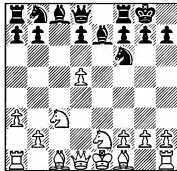
8...d5 is quite different:



Not surprisingly, the d5-square tends to come under the microscope in some ♖e2 lines, although after 9 cxd5 ♖xd5 10 ♖xd5 cxd5 both sides have isolated d-pawns. White can try to use his apparent tardy kingside development to be more active with 11 ♗d3

♖c6 12 0-0, the d4-pawn being nothing to worry about (for now) as 12...♖xd4? 13 ♖xh7+ ♗xh7 14 ♖xd4 is quite poor for Black. In De Souza-Crosa, Brazil 2003, White emerged with a clear advantage after 12...g6 13 ♖e3 ♗f6 14 ♖c1 ♗d6 15 ♖c5 ♖c7 16 ♗f3! ♗e6 17 ♖h5 ♗h4 18 ♖f6+ ♖xf6 (18...♗g7? 19 ♖xh7 ♖xf2+ 20 ♗xf2 ♗xh7 21 ♖f4 ♗d8 22 ♗h4+ ♗g8 23 ♖e5) 19 ♗xf6 ♗d8 20 ♖c7 ♖c6 21 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 22 ♗h6 ♖e8 23 ♖b5 ♖c6 24 ♖xb7. Instead Black should seek strategic exchanges with 12...♖g5 13 ♖e3 ♖xf4 14 ♖xf4 ♗f6 (again 14...♖xd4?! 15 ♖xh7+ ♗xh7 16 ♗xd4 is nice for White) 15 ♖e3 ♗f5, proposing a trade that would leave Black with a good knight versus bad bishop (although not so bad here) scenario (this time 15...♖xd4?? is even worse thanks to 16 ♖xd4 ♗xd4?? 17 ♖xh7+). Van Wely-Akopian, Bled 2002 continued 16 ♖e2 ♖fe8 17 ♗d2 ♗g6 18 ♖fc1 but 18...h5 19 ♖fl h4 20 f3 h3 21 g3 was okay for Black.

#### 8...exd5 9 cxd5



The most noticeable feature of the diagram position is White's d-pawn, around which the game tends to revolve. Black's main choice here is where to place the dark-squared bishop.

#### 9...♖e8

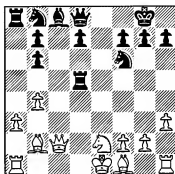
9...d6 is much less interesting and simply allows White the desired extra space at no cost and a nice knight outpost on d4, al-

though the best White can hope for anyway is a modest edge. Once again taste is a factor.

The major alternative to ... $\text{c}8$  is 9... $\text{c}5$  with the simple plan of continuing with normal development after ... $\text{d}7$ - $\text{d}6$  with this bishop more actively placed. Since White has invested some time in the space-gaining plan he cannot afford to allow such fluidity. For example the unambitious 10  $\text{d}4$ ? is quite pleasant for Black after 10... $\text{d}6$  11  $\text{c}e2$   $\text{a}6$  12 0-0  $\text{c}b7$ , when 13  $\text{g}5$   $\text{e}8$  14  $\text{b}4$   $\text{a}7$  15  $\text{c}c1$   $\text{h}6$  16  $\text{h}4$   $\text{f}8$  17  $\text{h}3$   $\text{d}7$  18  $\text{g}3$   $\text{c}8$  19  $\text{f}3$  (19  $\text{c}d6$ ?  $\text{c}c3$  20  $\text{c}c3$   $\text{c}d4$  21  $\text{c}c4$   $\text{c}c2$ ) 19... $\text{b}6$  was the course of Lautier-Anand, Monte Carlo 1997. Instead in Lautier-Topalov, Elista 1998 White guarded against enemy pressure on the  $\text{g}1$ - $\text{a}7$  diagonal, shoring up with 13  $\text{c}c3$   $\text{c}e5$  14  $\text{h}3$   $\text{c}c8$  with a level game. Unfortunately for White further expansion backfired: 15  $\text{b}4$ ?  $\text{b}6$  (this time potential discoveries mean that the bishop should be protected, and the rook is coming to  $\text{c}8$ ) 16  $\text{c}b3$   $\text{d}7$  17  $\text{a}4$   $\text{c}c8$  18  $\text{c}c1$   $\text{d}g6$ ? 19  $\text{f}d1$ ? (even after 19  $\text{f}e1$  Black can still try 19... $\text{c}c3$ ? 20  $\text{f}c3$   $\text{c}e7$  21  $\text{f}1$   $\text{c}e5$  with compensation on the dark squares, but now White is in trouble) 19... $\text{c}c3$ ? 20  $\text{f}c3$   $\text{c}e7$  21  $\text{c}a2$   $\text{c}c1$  22  $\text{c}c1$   $\text{c}c4$ ? 23  $\text{c}c4$   $\text{c}c3$ + 24  $\text{c}h1$  and now 24... $\text{c}d4$ ! would have kept Black in the driving seat.

In the event of 10  $\text{c}a4$   $\text{d}6$  White should prefer the consistent 11  $\text{c}c5$  followed by  $\text{c}c3$ ,  $\text{e}2$  and so on with a balanced game to 11  $\text{b}4$ ?  $\text{b}5$ ! in view of 12  $\text{b}c5$   $\text{b}a4$  13  $\text{c}6$   $\text{c}a5$ + with a clear advantage to Black, or 12  $\text{c}a3$   $\text{b}6$  13  $\text{c}b5$   $\text{a}6$  14  $\text{a}4$   $\text{c}b5$  15  $\text{a}b5$   $\text{d}g4$  16  $\text{d}d4$   $\text{c}x\text{f}2$ ! etc. Note that White's d-pawn is not passed after 10... $\text{b}6$  11  $\text{c}c5$ , so the recommendation is 11  $\text{c}c3$ ?  $\text{e}8$ + 12  $\text{e}2$   $\text{a}6$  13 0-0  $\text{c}c2$  14  $\text{c}c2$   $\text{a}6$  15  $\text{c}c3$ ? as in Yakovich-Alterman, Beijing 1997, when Black needed to reorganise. There followed 15... $\text{d}6$  16  $\text{h}3$   $\text{c}c5$  17  $\text{e}c3$   $\text{c}f4$  18  $\text{c}c1$   $\text{c}f6$  19  $\text{b}4$   $\text{c}c3$  20  $\text{c}c3$   $\text{c}e4$  21  $\text{c}b5$ ? with a balanced game.

Perhaps the obvious response is 10  $\text{b}4$ , to which the less obvious reply 10... $\text{d}6$  is quite playable, e.g. 11  $\text{g}3$   $\text{e}8$  12  $\text{g}2$   $\text{e}5$  13 0-0  $\text{a}5$  or 11  $\text{b}2$   $\text{c}5$  12  $\text{d}g3$   $\text{a}5$  with an effective looking redeployment on the long diagonal and a nice loosening up of the queenside, creating a target on  $\text{b}4$  or securing the  $\text{c}5$ -square. 10... $\text{b}6$  11  $\text{c}a4$  sees further harassment of the bishop. Then 11... $\text{d}6$ ? 12  $\text{c}b6$   $\text{a}b6$  (12... $\text{c}b6$  13  $\text{c}c3$ ) 13  $\text{c}c3$ ! (13  $\text{d}g3$   $\text{c}e7$ +! 14  $\text{e}2$   $\text{c}e5$  15  $\text{e}c3$   $\text{g}4$ ) 13... $\text{d}g4$  14  $\text{c}d4$  (14  $\text{e}2$ ?  $\text{c}x\text{f}2$  15  $\text{c}x\text{f}2$   $\text{c}f6$ +) 14... $\text{c}f6$  15  $\text{c}x\text{f}6$   $\text{c}x\text{f}6$  16  $\text{e}c3$  (16  $\text{c}f4$ ?) 16... $\text{e}8$  17  $\text{c}d2$  left Black with weaknesses on  $\text{b}6$  and  $\text{d}6$  in Mitenkov-Tunik, Elista 1995, while 13... $\text{c}f5$  14  $\text{e}2$   $\text{c}e4$  15  $\text{c}c4$   $\text{c}c4$  16 0-0  $\text{c}f6$  17  $\text{a}2$   $\text{c}g6$  18  $\text{f}3$   $\text{b}1$  19  $\text{c}d2$   $\text{c}d7$  20  $\text{b}2$   $\text{c}f5$  21  $\text{c}e1$  was also poor for Black in Gligoric-Nikolic, Yugoslavia 1984. Consequently Black should stay more active with 11... $\text{c}c8$  12  $\text{c}b6$   $\text{a}b6$ , intending to lure the d-pawn forward, when 13  $\text{d}6$ ?  $\text{c}e4$  14  $\text{b}2$   $\text{b}5$ ! (introducing the idea of rounding up the pawn with ... $\text{a}6$ ) 15  $\text{c}d4$   $\text{c}g5$  is preferable for Black. The modest 13  $\text{g}3$   $\text{d}6$  14  $\text{g}2$  doesn't look much for White, but 13  $\text{h}3$  produced interesting play in Malaniuk-Tunik, Yalta 1996 after 13... $\text{e}5$  14  $\text{b}2$   $\text{c}d5$  15  $\text{c}c2$



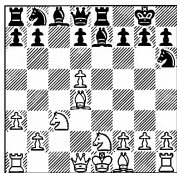
Black has been left with a comical rook on  $\text{d}5$  after picking up what is effectively a gambit pawn, and White's tardy kingside development makes exploiting this a little prob-

lematic. I expect most people would feel more comfortable on White's side of the board in the diagram position, which is why the more traditional looking 13...d6 14 ♖e3 ♘e4! might hold more appeal. Then 15 ♗d4 ♘d7 16 g4 f5! 17 ♖g2 ♘e5 18 0-0 ♘g6! was – not surprisingly – unclear in Guliev-Volzhin, Moscow 1994, 19 gxf5 ♖xf5 20 ♘g3 ♘h4 21 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 22 ♗xb6 ♗f6 23 ♖f4 ♘h4 offering Black compensation for the pawn. These lines are worth investigating further, not least to get better acquainted with the plans available to both sides after ...♖c5, which is certainly uncompromising.

With 9...♗e8 Black addresses White's king-side development by preparing to pin the knight. From e8 the rook also supports a future ...♗e4 and is within striking distance of the enemy d-pawn should it advance to d6.

#### 10 d6

White sticks to the script. Continuing in a more orthodox fashion with 10 ♖e3 favours White after 10...d6, but a spanner in the works is Adorjan's 10...♘g4 11 ♖d4 ♘h6!



The knight is coming to f5, an idea that is yet another demonstration that Black is OK, as the Hungarian GM would say. White is not short of options, but the good news ends there. The tactical justification of the idea is seen in the line 12 d6 ♖xd6 13 ♖xg7 ♘f5 with a clear advantage to Black, e.g. 14 ♖h6 ♗h4 15 ♖c1 ♖c5 16 g3 ♗d4! etc.

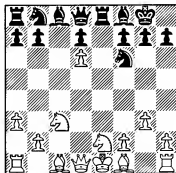
Groszpeter-Adorjan, Hungary 1983 was

equally unpleasant for White after 12 g4? d6 13 h3 f5. The logical response is 12 ♗d3 d6 13 ♘g3 which covers f5 but still leaves Black slightly better, e.g. 13...♖f6+ 14 ♖c2 ♘d7 and the trade of bishops will give Black the e5-square, although this is a typical example of a pawn advance leaving behind or bypassing ostensibly minor yet significant squares.

10 g3 gives Black the best of both worlds after 10...♖c5. Then 11 b4?! backfires because the new arrival on b4 gives Black something to bite on, e.g. 11...♖b6 12 ♖g2 d6 13 h3 a5!?, Benitah-Cvitan, Baden 1999. Wells gives 14 ♖b2 axb4 15 axb4 ♗xa1 16 ♖xa1 ♘a6 17 ♗b3 ♖f5 and 16 ♗xa1 ♘a6 17 ♗a3 ♖f5 18 0-0 ♖d3 as nice for Black and suggests that 14 bxa5 might be no worse than the game continuation, which was 14 b5 ♘bd7 15 0-0 ♘c5 16 ♘d4 ♘fe4 17 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 18 ♖b2 ♗f6 with an awkward double pin on the knight, 19 ♗d3 ♘c5 20 ♗c2 ♗g6! highlighting the worth of the c5-square by undermining White's defence of the vulnerable squares a4 and d3.

In reply to 11 ♘a4 Black has both 11...d6 and 11...b6!, the latter working well after 12 ♘xc5 bxc5 13 ♖g2 ♖a6 14 ♖e3 ♘g4 etc. This leaves 11 ♖g2 d6 12 h3 with a level game after either 12...♖f5 13 0-0 ♘e4! 14 ♘a4 ♘d7, with a grip on the centre helped by playing around the d5-pawn, or 12...a6 13 0-0 ♘bd7 14 ♘d4 ♘e5 followed by ...♖d7.

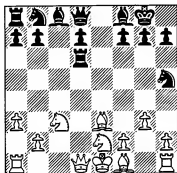
#### 10...♖f8 11 g3



This fianchetto is forced due to the pin, but since the only way out for the c8-bishop is with ...b7-b6, the long diagonal is a good home anyway. In terms of development White is a shade behind, but the d6-pawn is an unwelcome visitor in Black's camp, serving to push Black back and provide White with more room for manoeuvre. Of course the advanced pawn is also vulnerable and can be hit with ...♙e6, White being prepared to let it go because engineering its capture might cause some inconvenience for the second player.

**11...b6**

For the moment Black resists temptation. Requiring investigation is the materialistic 11...♙e6, when White can ignore the threat altogether with 12 ♖g2 ♙xd6 13 ♛c2, following up with castling and a natural occupation of the d5-square that offers White sufficient compensation. However, 12 ♗f4 addresses the fact that Black is committed to picking up the d6-pawn and therefore practically forces a further unattractive move in the shape of 12...♗h5, leading to what looks like a beginner's position after 13 ♗e3 ♙xd6



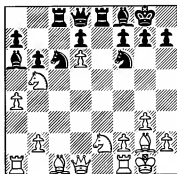
This time the knight stands out on h5 and White can continue in the knowledge that it must eventually return to f6. White's compensation is beyond doubt. Atalik-Golod, Heraklio 1995 went 14 ♛b3 ♗c6 15 ♗g2 ♗f6 16 0-0 ♙e6 17 ♗d4 ♗xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♛a5 19 ♗d5 ♗e4 20 ♛a2 ♛d8 with, per-

haps, a bit more than a pawn's worth for White, although Black is solid enough to make the extra material count if the pressure is lifted. The alternative is 14 ♛c2, e.g. 14...♗c6 15 ♗g2 ♗f6 16 0-0 ♙e6 17 ♙ad1 etc.

11...♗e4 12 ♗xe4 ♙xe4 13 ♗f4 ♛a5+ 14 ♛d2 ♙xd2+ 15 ♗xd2 ♗c6 was the simplifying course of Arlandi-Ekstroem, Montecatini Terme 1997. White came to the aid of the d-pawn with 16 ♙d1, when 16...b6 17 ♗g2 ♙e8 18 ♗d4 ♗b7 19 ♗b5 ♙ab8 20 ♗c7 ♙ec8 steered the game towards a draw. 19 ♗xc6 looks like a considerable improvement, when 19...♗xc6 20 ♗xc6 dxc6 21 ♙he1 sees the d-pawn transformed to a genuine fighter, while 19...dxc6? 20 d7 ♙ad8 21 ♗h3 is even worse for Black.

**12 ♗g2 ♗c6 13 b4**

Gaining a bit more space and introducing b4-b5 (ruling out ...♗a6) now that White is in the driving seat on the long diagonal. The blunt 13 ♗b5 ♗a6 14 a4 ♙c8 15 0-0



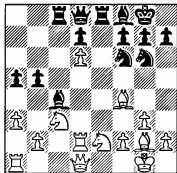
15...♗xb5 16 axb5 ♗a5 17 ♗c3 was an edge for White in Shulman-Tunik, Pardubice 1996, but here 15...♗xd6! seems to turn the tables in Black's favour in view of the now vulnerable knight on e2, e.g. 16 ♗xd6 ♗xc2 17 ♛b3 ♙e6 18 ♗xc8 (18 ♙e1? ♗d4) 18...♗xf1 19 ♗xf1 ♛xc8, when the pawn and decent presence in the centre easily outweigh the bishop pair.

13 0-0 ♗a6 is the alternative. After 14 ♙e1

♞c8 White should play 15 ♖f4, transposing to 14 ♖f4, below. It is too late for 15 b4! because it invites Black to infiltrate with 15...♙c4, when 16 b5 ♖e5 helped Black to an advantage in Wang Lei-Altzman, Beijing 1997. Then 17 ♖d4 ♞e6 18 ♖g5 ♙xe2 19 ♙xe2 ♙xd6 fails to give White enough for the pawn, while 17 ♖a4? ♙xe2 18 ♖xe2 runs into 18...♖d3. In the game 17 ♖f4 met with 17...♙xd6!, winning a free pawn, the point being that 18 ♖xd6? is undone by 18...♖f3+ 19 ♙xf3 ♞xe1+ 20 ♖g2 ♙f1+ etc. 14 ♖f4 ♞c8 15 ♞e1 ♖e5 16 ♖a4 is preferable, when Polaczek-Henley, Philadelphia 1989 saw White's bishop pair offer the superior prospects after 16...♙xe2 17 ♙xe2 ♖d3 18 ♞d2 ♖c5 (18...♖xf4 19 ♖xf4 might be better, although I think White has a slight pull) 19 ♖d1 ♖ce4 20 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21 ♞d4 ♖c5 22 ♙d5 ♖f6 23 ♖d2 h6 24 h4 ♖e6 25 ♞e4 ♖c5 26 ♞b4 ♖h8 27 ♞d1 and the light-squared bishop made a difference. (White eventually uncorked ♙g5.)

In Sadler-Nikolic, Monte Carlo 1998 White had some compensation for the d6-pawn after 16...♙c4 17 ♞ed1 ♙xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♖c4 19 ♞de1 ♖xd6 20 ♖c3 a5 21 ♖d4 ♖f5 22 ♖d3.

Black does not have to part with his bishop so readily, and Miles-Csom, Esbjerg 1984 demonstrated a less compromising approach in 17...♖g6 18 ♞d2 a5 19 ♖d1 b5



There followed 20 ♙e3 b4 21 axb4 axb4

22 ♖d5 ♖xd5 23 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 24 ♙xd5 ♖e5 and Black had at least traded like for like, resulting in equality.

### 13...♙b7

Estremera Panos-Patelli, Arco di Trento 1997 went 13...a6 14 0-0 ♞e6 15 ♖f4 ♖h5 16 ♙d5 ♖xf4 17 ♖xf4 ♙xd6 18 ♖e4 ♞h6 19 ♙xf7+! ♖h8 (19...♖xf7? 20 ♖d5+ ♖e8 21 ♞f1 is decisive) 20 ♙d5 ♙b7 21 ♞e1 ♙e7 22 ♞c1 ♖f8 23 ♞c3 ♙f6 24 ♖xf6 ♙xf6 25 ♞ce3 with a clear advantage to White.

13...♞b8 14 0-0 h6 is a worthy alternative, reserving the right to post the bishop on b7 or a6, depending on how White responds. For example 15 ♖f4 ♙b7 16 ♖b5 g5 17 ♙e3 ♞e6 was seen in Khalifman-Cu.Hansen, Munich 1992, the hit on the bishop showing that Black's nudge of the h-pawn was more than a waiting move. In fact after 18 ♖cd4 ♖xd4 19 ♖xd4 ♙xd6 20 ♙xb7 ♞xb7 21 ♖f3 ♖a8 22 ♖b5 ♞c6 23 ♖d4 ♞d6 24 ♖b5 ♞c6 25 ♖d4 a draw was agreed in this odd position. In the game Vaissier-Adrian, French Championship 1996 Black reacted to 15 ♖b5 with 15...♙a6 16 ♖c3 ♞c5 and after 17 a4 could have considered capturing the b4-pawn, although 17...♞c6 18 ♖d5 ♙xd6 19 ♙b2 ♙e5 20 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 21 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 22 ♖xd7 ♖xb4 anyway looked quite nice for Black.

### 14 0-0 a6?!

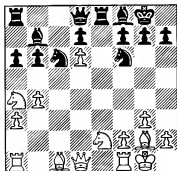
I'm not sure about this defensive move. Nor do I have much confidence in 14...♞b8!? as 15 ♖b5 adds weight to the threat of ♖c7. In Kharlov-Van der Wiel, Leeuwarden 1997 White emerged from 15...♖e5?! 16 ♖c7 ♖f3+ 17 ♖h1 ♙xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♙xd6 with an advantage that would have been considerable had he followed up with 19 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 20 ♞d1. 15...♙a6 16 ♖c3 does not help Black, either. Rosenberg-Moskow, New York Enhance MCC 1992 continued 16...♞e6 (16...♞e5 17 ♖c7 ♙xf1 18 ♖xf1 ♙xd6 19 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 20 ♙f4! ♞c6) 17 ♖f4 with a poor position for Black, whose obsession with d6 soon landed



him in hot water after 17...♟c8?! (17...♞b7 18 a4 is a lesser evil) 18 ♟d5 ♞f6 19 ♞e1 ♟b7? (19...♟xb5 20 ♟xb5 ♟xd6 21 ♟d4 is very good for White but not decisive) 20 ♟e4 ♞f5 21 ♟g5 etc.

Again the direct 14...♞c6 is on, e.g. 15 ♟f4 ♟h5 16 ♟e3 ♟f6 17 ♟f4 ♟h5 18 ♟e3 ♟f6 when Vaissier-Van Gisbergen, Hyeres 1992 saw White break the repetition with 19 ♞b3, when 19...♟xd6 20 ♞ad1 ♟e5 21 ♟d5 ♟a6 22 ♞fe1 ♞c8 23 ♟ef4 ♟d6 24 ♟xf6+ ♞xf6 25 ♟d5 ♞d8 provided White with the usual compensation.

15 ♟a4



Black has prevented what could be an inconvenient b4-b5 and kept White's knight out of b5, but the result is a weakening of b6. It is interesting that a computer should come up with a typically precautionary 'human' move in 14...a6.

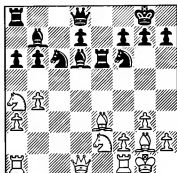
15...♞c6

As White's latest left the queen overloaded, defending both d6 and e2, the forcing 15...♟xd6 should be considered. 16 ♞xd6 ♞xe2 17 ♟e3 punishes Black's 14th move, e.g. 17...b5 18 ♟c5 ♞c8 19 ♞d3, while *Crafty* came up with 17...♟g4 18 ♟xb6 ♞e7 19 ♞c7! d6 20 ♟f3 ♞xc7 21 ♟xc7 ♞e7 22 ♟xd6 ♞e6 23 ♞f1 etc.

16 ♟e3 ♟xd6

16...♞xd6 looks clumsy here, a typical example being 17 ♞e1 b5 18 ♟c5 ♞c8 19 ♟f4, and returning the rook to the fold with

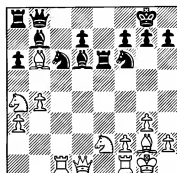
17...♞c6 leaves White on top after 18 ♟f4 ♞c8 19 ♟xb6 ♞b8 20 ♞d1.



17 ♟xb6

17 ♟xb6 leads, unsurprisingly, to a positional advantage for White after 17...♞b8 18 ♟c4 ♟c7 19 ♟f4 ♞e8 20 ♟d6, but in the event of the 'forcing' 18 ♟h3 Black assumes control thanks to 18...♞xe3! 19 fxe3 ♞xb6 20 ♞xf6 (20 ♞xd6? ♞xc3+ 21 ♞f2 ♞xf2+ 22 ♟xf2 ♟c4+) 20...gxf6 21 ♞xd6 ♞xc3+ 22 ♟f1 ♞f3+ 23 ♟e1 ♞e8 24 ♞a2 ♟e5 and White is losing.

17...♞b8 18 ♞c1



White has won back the pawn with the superior structure, having two pawn islands against Black's three, which effectively amounts to a queenside majority in that the d-pawn will have no interaction with the others on this flank. White also has the better placed pieces and the bonus of a useful

knight outpost on c5. Black now takes the logical step of relieving some of the pressure through exchanges, although White's positional pluses remain intact.

**18...♖a7 19 ♗xa7**

And here we see a trade that looks far from natural in that White surrenders an influential looking bishop for a mere knight but, for a computer – which has no such hang-ups – this is quite normal as the remaining pieces continue to out-perform their rivals.

**19...♞xa7 20 ♖d4 ♞e8 21 ♗xb7 ♞xb7  
22 ♞d3 ♗f8 23 ♖c5 ♞b6 24 ♞fd1 h6**

White's game is much the easier to play. The next little knight trip seems to be directed at the a5-square, which suggests dropping back to b3 would do the trick.

**25 ♖a4 ♞b8 26 ♖b2 a5?!**

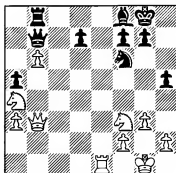
Black gets this in before the knight comes to c4, but the price is a sound passed pawn which, from this point on, is the main cause of Black's problems.

**27 b5 ♞c7 28 ♞xc7 ♞xc7 29 ♖a4 ♞b7  
30 b6 ♞a8 31 ♞b3 h5 32 ♞c1 ♞e4**

Black's pseudo aggressive stance might be enough to unsettle White in a normal game

but, under the circumstances, White simply continues to concentrate on the queenside. Note how the d-pawn has no constructive role to play in the proceedings.

**33 ♖f3 ♞b8 34 ♞e1 ♞b7 1-0**



The transition to the very favourable diagram position has been achieved without the need for anything other than simple, sensible, positionally oriented play from White. The b-pawn is the key, and forty(!) moves later a rook endgame was reached with the pawn on b7, Black's rook still blockading on b8 and White's dominating on e7... White converted on the 80th move...1-0

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4...c5: The Hübner Variation



1 d4 d6 2 c4 e6 3 d3 b4 4 e3 c5 5 d3 c6 6 f3 dxc3+ 7 bxc3 d6

This is very 'Nimzo' indeed. After 5 d3 c6 6 f3 dxc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 White's c-pawns are firmly blockaded by the supported c5-pawn. In an ideal world Black would like to see the centre closed, as is the case in Game 13 following 8 e4 e5 9 d5 etc. If White just sits there in the mistaken belief that the broad pawn centre and space advantage are enough, then the structural weakness(es) will serve – eventually – as an unpleasant wake-up call. Using this extra territory to facilitate a kingside offensive makes sense, but Black is by no means unhappy to see such activity. Vaganian's strategy is an interesting alternative to the 'main' line (dealt with in the notes). Game 14 is an example of the more modern approach, with White refusing to close the centre completely, instead maintaining the tension and retaining the option of using e4, for example, for his pieces, which enjoy more freedom thanks to the open lines.

*Game 13*  
**Vaganian-Short**  
*Horgen 1995*

1 d4 d6 2 c4 e6 3 d3 b4 4 e3 c5 5

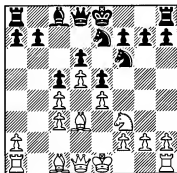
d3 c6 6 f3 dxc3+

Black damages the enemy structure while he still can, aiming for a layout of pawns that is suited more to knights than bishops, preferably a closed centre – the subject of this game. Of course White's doubled c-pawns need to be blockaded to facilitate an attack (usually against c4) later in the game, so expect the c5-pawn to stay rooted to the spot – unless Black is tempted to take on d4 when White holds back the d-pawn (see the next main game).

7 bxc3 d6 8 e4

The next main game sees White holding back the e-pawn in order to keep the game open and make the most of the bishop pair.

8...e5 9 d5 d7



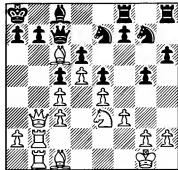
The standard position for this specific variation. Note that after establishing the fact that the c4-pawn is the traditional target for Black, the c7-square is nevertheless the appropriate choice for Black's knight, rather than a5. This is because White's weakness is not going anywhere for a long time and Black is therefore free to organise an assault when it is most convenient and effective. In the meantime it is the other flank where much of the action is to take place, and Black cannot afford to fool himself into thinking that the closed centre precludes activity from White on the kingside. For example White might engineer an aggressive f2-f4 break with a mind to pressing on the dark squares now that Black no longer has the relevant bishop. In this case ...g6 will monitor both f4 and e5, the latter square being particularly important in the event of a trade of pawns and a subsequent blockade of the e4-pawn which, in turn, could prove vulnerable. Moreover the f4-square can come into play even without the advance of White's pawn, the e5-square again being a possible focus of attention after an exchange of pieces on f4 featuring a recapture with the e5-pawn. Additionally, on e7 the knight both adds protection to the f5-square, which White occasionally approaches with his remaining knight, and supports Black's own break involving ...f7-f5. While I am not a great fan of this system for White compared with the more flexible options that are investigated in the next main game, it is nonetheless an attractive proposition for those players for whom a space advantage makes a difference, as well as the albeit long-term 'advantage' of the two bishops. Black certainly cannot afford to sit back on his structural lead, expecting to automatically decide the game by picking up the c4-pawn in the ending. The journey is not an easy one. However, Nimzo players wouldn't be Nimzo players if they didn't like this line from Black's side of the board, and Black is well placed to fight fire with fire when the

temperature hots up, as Short demonstrates in our main game.

#### 10 ♖h4

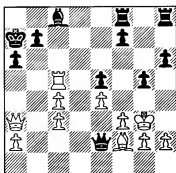
White has several 10th moves available, some more important than others:

10 0-0 h6 can lead to the main game after 11 ♖h4, but another idea behind castling is to leave the e1-square free for another knight manoeuvre to e3 via c2 or g2, the latter route following Black's inducement of g2-g3 by homing in on f4 with ...g6 (perhaps even ...g7-g5 first). This is nothing special for White, but I include the following game to demonstrate what can befall Black if he fails to act: 11 ♖e1 ♜c7 (11...g5!? is interesting, but Black is perhaps too patient throughout) 12 ♖c2 ♙d7 13 ♖e3 0-0-0 14 f3 g5 15 ♜b1 ♜b8 16 ♙c2 ♖h5 17 ♙a4 ♙c8 18 ♜f2 ♖g7 (way too slow – 18...♖f4 is the late but consistent follow up to Black's play) 19 ♜b2 ♜a8 20 ♜b3 ♙d8 21 ♙c6!



We are following Shashin-Novikov, Leningrad 1972. I always enjoy studying a game which features a theme that is 'visual' (as England's players are fond of saying) yet seemed destined to materialise. Once White had brought his third and final major piece to the b-file we could expect something like this to appear, although I believe sending the bishop round to a6 would have had even more bite. However, the point here is to cleverly remove the otherwise very fixed d5-pawn in order to make way for the knight to

join in the fun, exploiting the pin on the b7-pawn thanks to the mate on b8. The game continued 21...♖xc6 22 dxc6 ♖xc6 23 ♕d5 and White's new arrival was trouble. This idea would not be playable had Black followed up his pressure on f4 by actually lodging a knight there. As it was 23...♗e6 24 ♖a3 ♗b8 25 ♖b5 ♗c7 (25...♗f4? 26 ♖xf4 gxf4 27 ♖a5) 26 ♖a5 a6 27 ♖b6 was the progress White was aiming for. Black's best is 27...♗d7 28 ♖xc7 ♗xc7 (28...♗xc7 29 ♖axa6) but then 29 ♖xd6! is the breakthrough, e.g. 29...♗xd6 30 ♖xc5+ ♗b6! 31 ♖e3 ♗d1+ 32 ♗f2 ♗c2+ 33 ♗g3 ♗c2 34 ♖f2 ♗a7



35 ♖a5+ ♗b8 36 ♗d6+ ♗a8 37 ♖b6. In the game Black took the shorter route to the loss: 27...♗e8? 28 ♖xd6 ♖xd5 29 cxd5 ♗e7 30 ♖b6 1-0.

10 h3 is another semi-useful move. Kamsky-Karpov, Linares 1991 continued 10...h6 11 ♖e3 ♖a5 12 ♖b3 ♗c7 13 ♕d2 ♖h5 14 g3 g5 15 0-0-0 ♖g6 16 ♖e2 ♖f6 17 ♖df1 ♗e7 with a tense game in prospect.

White is not really threatening anything on the kingside, but Karpov anyway opted to use c7 as a home for his king, a traditional post with the closed centre. After 18 ♖b1 ♗d8 19 ♖f3 ♗c7 20 h4 g4 21 ♗e1 ♖h5 the battle of attrition began in this balanced situation...

With 10 ♕d2 White frees the f-pawn and plans to relocate the knight, preferably on g3

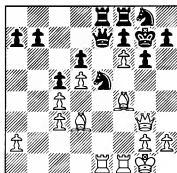
in order to hit f5 and be ready to occupy e4 if it becomes available after ...f7-f5, e4xf5 etc. Rather than castle Black does best to get his pieces working, e.g. 10...h6 11 ♖f1 ♖g6 to look at the f4-square. Mirzoev-Pogorelov, Seville 2003 continued 12 g3 ♖g4 13 f3 ♖h3 14 ♗e3 ♖h7! 15 ♖b1 b6 16 ♗e2 ♗f6 17 ♖g2 0-0 and only now, satisfied with his kingside presence, was Black ready to castle, 18 0-0 ♗e7 19 ♗c2 ♗d7 20 ♖f2 f5 achieving a thematic break which the knight is inappropriately placed to deal with.

With 10 ♖h4 White monitors g6, looks to f5 as a potential outpost and frees the f-pawn.

### 10...h6

Black tends to flick in this modest pawn move due to its relevance in a number of situations. For example with f2-f4 on the horizon Black would like to have more of a presence on the dark squares, White needing to consider the consequences of a capture on f4 (and subsequent recapture with a piece) being followed by ...g7-g5. This thrust can also come into play anyway, as we have already seen, the weakening of f5 a price that Black is often willing to play in order to clamp down on f4. Additionally ...h7-h6 introduces a further option of ...♖h7-g5, provides the king with an extra square and – for what it is worth – rules out ♖g5. The best Black can hope for with alternatives is a transposition to other lines. For example 10...0-0 looks committal and can transpose to the note(s) to White's 11th move after 11 0-0 (11...h6 12 f4 ♖g6 13 ♖xg6 for instance), while (11...h6) 12 f3 g5 13 ♖f5 ♖xf5 14 exf5 has also been played, although with his king already on g8 Black has less in terms of choice. Atanu-Berkes, Paks 2000 saw Black unnecessarily compromise his kingside: 11...♗e8 12 ♖f5 g6?! 13 ♖h6+ ♗g7 14 ♖g4 ♖g8 15 f4! exf4 16 ♖xf4 ♗d7 (Black soon regrets hitting the knight) 17 ♗e3 ♖cf6 18 ♖f3 ♗e7. It is worth noting how the closed centre can become a tense area after this

exchange of pawns, with the focus on e5 a worry for Black, as well as the pressure on the now exposed d6-pawn. In this position Black's knights are poorly placed and he is generally passive, prompting White's next – 19 ♖f5+! ♙xf5 (19...gxf5 20 ♖g3+ ♜h8 [20...♙g4 21 exf5] 21 ♙xd6 ♜d8 22 ♙xf8 ♜xf8 23 e5) 20 exf5 ♙d7 21 ♜g3 ♙e5 22 ♙ae1 ♙ae8 23 f6+



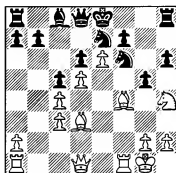
1-0 (23...♙xf6 24 ♙xe5! dxe5 25 ♙g5 is the simplest, e.g. 25...♙d8 26 ♙xf6+ ♜xf6 27 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 28 ♜f2+ ♜g7 29 ♜xc5 etc.). A fitting finish that no doubt proved an eventual help for Black in future games, serving as a memorable warning against voluntarily creating holes in front of the king. This time White's damaged queenside was never an issue, unlike the dark square complex on the other flank. It is interesting that strong players are well aware of the implications of White's kingside aggression and the manner in which this is addressed by Black, giving such factors the same level of consideration as the doubled c-pawns. Club players, on the other hand, often fail to properly appreciate these other, less obvious but equally relevant themes, being too involved with the traditional Nimzo strategy characterised by ...♙xc3(+) because this is one of the ideas that originally attracted them to the defence. Getting to grips with this kind of psychology is always useful, but particularly important in lines where one side's attack-oriented plans

need to be seen in advance by the defender.

10...♙g6?! invites 11 ♙f5 ♙xf5 12 exf5 when 12...♙f4 13 ♙xf4 exf4 14 0-0 favours White in view of the target on f4, while the brief skirmish 12...e4 13 fxg6 exd3 14 gx7+ ♜xf7 15 0-0 ♙e8 16 ♜xd3 ♜e7 would also have been good for White in Lesiege-Zarnicki, Cuba 1993 had he kept the queen out of e4 with 17 f3, e.g. 17...♜e2 18 ♜xc2 ♙xc2 19 ♙f4.

### 11 0-0

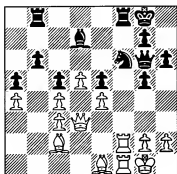
The main line is the aggressive 11 f4, which makes sense and keeps Black on his toes, although there is no reason for Black to fear anything as long as he is aware of how to treat this or that plan. The first reply to 11 f4 that springs to mind is 11...exf4? 12 ♙xf4 g5, demonstrating that, in some variations at least, information is indeed a big help – although, as some of you may be aware, I would still prefer to use the following line's positional foundation when adding it to the mental database than to blindly remember the moves. Anyway, Lukacs-Somlai, Borsodtavho 1991 went 13 e5! ♙g4 14 e6 ♙f6 15 0-0



The fork has lost its appeal now that Black's kingside is in tatters. The closed centre that characterises this variation soon disappeared, and the e6-pawn is the key. For example 15...gx4 16 ♙xf4 ♙cg8 17 exf7+ ♜xf7 18 ♜h5+ ♜f8 19 ♙af1 is too much, e.g. 19...♜c7 20 ♜g6 ♜f8 21 ♜xf6+! ♜xf6

(21...♖xf6 22 ♖g6+) 22 ♜xf6 ♖xf6 23 ♖g6+ ♜f7 24 ♖xh8+ ♜g7 25 ♖g6 etc. Similarly 15...gxf4 16 ♔d2 ♖eg8 17 exf7+ ♜xf7 18 ♜h5+ ♜f8 19 ♜xf6+ ♖xf6 20 ♔xh6+ ♜xh6 21 ♜xh6+ is even worse. Consequently 15...fxe6 was played, when 16 ♔e5 dxe5 17 ♜xf6 gxf4 18 ♜h5+ ♜d7 19 ♜xe6 ♜g8 20 ♜xe5 prompted Black's resignation (20...♜g5 21 ♜ff6).

The antidote to 11 f4 was given a part in chess history when it appeared with success in the classic 1972 world championship match: 11...♖g6! 12 ♖xg6 (12 ♖f5 ♔xf5 13 exf5 ♖xf4) 12...fxg6 and now Spassky-Fischer, World Championship (Game 5), Reykjavik 1972 was awful for White after 13 fxe5! dxe5 14 ♔e3 b6 15 0-0 0-0 16 a4? a5, when White's positional error (in an otherwise equal position) added another fixed pawn to the list (b6 is also weak, but this is not as significant). There followed 17 ♜b1 ♔d7 18 ♜b2 ♜b8 19 ♜bf2 ♜c7 20 ♔c2 g5 21 ♔d2 ♜e8 22 ♔e1 ♜g6 23 ♜d3

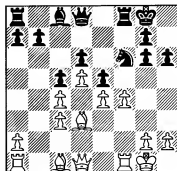


The sorry pawns on a4, c4 and e4 are keeping White too busy. Black switches to the f4-square: 23...♖h5 24 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 25 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 26 ♔d1 ♖f4 27 ♜c2?? ♔xa4 0-1.

Not surprisingly 13 fxe5 failed to catch on, the main line being 13 0-0 0-0.

White looks the more threatening of the two but, despite initial appearances, Black is holding up well. Voluntarily accepting dou-

bled pawns seems unwise, opposing the rule that we should capture towards the centre looking particularly anti-positional considering the pressure against Black's centre. However, we have already seen the efficacy of taking a look at f4 by putting a pawn on g5, and in some cases this is made an easier decision for Black as the defensive wall in front of the king remains intact now that a substitute pawn can carry out the task. (A trade on e5 does leave the d5-pawn passed, but this cannot be used for a long time, unlike Black's majority.) Furthermore, with the pawn still on f7, for example, White would have an easy plan in f4-f5 followed by g2-g4, h2-h4 and g4-g5 etc. In the diagram position, however, f4-f5 can be met with ...g6-g5 when appropriate, when White will have to break through an extra layer of defence.

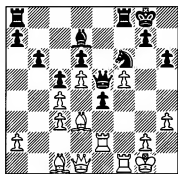


Let us look at a few sample lines:

14 ♜e1 ♔d7 15 h3 ♜c7 16 ♜b1 b6 17 ♜b2 ♖h5 18 f5 g5 19 g3 ♖f6 20 g4 ♖h7 21 ♔e3 was agreed drawn in T.Giorgadze-Gavrikov, Yerevan Zonal 1982. In this kind of position White has aspirations to find a way through on the kingside and Black on the queenside, both plans requiring careful monitoring. Here is what befell White when he neglected his queenside in Tarjan-Dzindzichashvili, Hastings 1977: (14 ♜e1 ♔d7) 15 ♜g3 ♜e8 16 f5 g5 17 ♜h3 ♜h5 18 ♜e3 a6 19 ♔d2 b5 20 ♜a6! bxc4 21 ♔e2 ♜f7 22 ♔xc4 ♔b5 23 ♜d3 ♜fb8 24 h3 ♜b7

25 ♖c1 ♗xc4 26 ♜xc4 ♜b5 and there was only one playing area, and that belonged to Black. The rest of the game is well worth a look because White never gets a chance (and his bishop stirs only to signal resignation): 27 ♜e2 ♜xc2 28 ♜xc2 ♜b1 29 ♜f2 ♜ab8 30 ♜e3 ♜8b5 31 ♜d3 ♜a1 32 ♜c2 c4+? 33 ♜e3 ♜bb1 34 ♜e1 ♜h5 35 ♜d2 ♜f4 36 ♜g1 ♜d3 37 g3 ♜f7 38 ♜f1 ♜e7 39 ♜g1 ♜d7 40 ♜f1 a5 41 ♜g1 ♜c5 42 ♜e1 ♜b3+ 43 axb3 cxb3 44 ♜b2 ♜a2 45 c4 a4 46 ♜e3 ♜axb2+ 47 ♜xb2 ♜xb2+ and Black won.

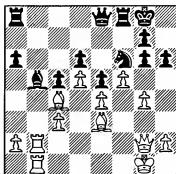
14 ♜b1 puts an immediate marker on the b-file. Spassky-Hort, Tilburg 1979 saw the solid 14...b6 (14...exf4 15 ♜xf4 ♜e7 16 ♜c2 ♜g4 17 ♜e3 g5 18 ♜xd6! ♜xd6 19 e5 ♜ac8 20 ♜fe1 as in Danner-Vegh, Budapest 1988, should be better for White after 20...♜b8 21 ♜g3 ♜d7 22 ♜xg4 ♜xc5 23 ♜g3 b6) 15 ♜b2 (15 f5 gxf5 16 exf5 e4 17 ♜e2 ♜h7 18 g4 ♜g5 19 ♜g2 ♜f6 20 ♜e1 ♜a6 21 ♜f4 ♜ac8 favoured Black in Azmaiparashvili-Andersson, Panormo 2001) 15...♜c7 16 h3 ♜d7 17 f5 gxf5 (17...g5 18 g4 is another flavour, but Black does not want to wait around for h3-h4) 18 exf5 e4! 19 ♜e2 ♜e5



The game soon ends in a draw but, given the choice, I would prefer to be sitting on Black's side of the board. 20 ♜e1 ♜xf5 21 ♜f4 ♜e7 22 ♜g5! (White finds the key move) 22...♜d7 with a draw.

Finally there is 14 f5, another bold move that can be welcomed with a bold reply.

14...♜d7 15 ♜e3 (15 g4!? b5!?) 15...♜e8 16 ♜b1 ♜b8 17 g4 b6 (17...a6 18 ♜b6) 18 ♜f2 (18 h4 h5! is clearly better for Black) 18...a6 19 ♜f3 b5! 20 ♜fb2 ♜a8! 21 ♜g2 bxc4 22 ♜xc4 ♜b5!



This is Vaidya-Miles, Brighton 1984, England's great fighter emerging with a clear advantage after 23 ♜xb5!? (23 ♜xb5 axb5 24 ♜xb5 ♜a4! and e4 and g4 are weak) 23...axb5 24 ♜xb5 ♜b8! 25 ♜b3 ♜a3!! 26 c4? (26 ♜xa3 ♜xb5 27 ♜c2 ♜xg4 28 c4 ♜b4 29 ♜c3 is the lesser evil) 26...♜a7 etc.

Quite different but effective is 14...gxf5 15 exf5 e4!?, a recurring theme that seems to serve Black well. In Sideif Sade-Allahverdiev, Baku 1996 Black made good use of the e-pawn: 16 ♜c2 ♜d7 17 ♜c3 ♜e7 18 h3 ♜ac8 19 ♜d2 ♜h7! 20 g4 ♜h4 21 ♜g2 ♜g5 22 ♜xg5 ♜xg5 23 ♜ae1 e3 24 ♜f3 ♜e5 25 ♜e2 ♜fe8 etc.

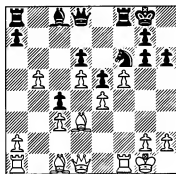
Yet another interesting choice is 14...b5!? 15 cxb5 (15 g4 bxc4 16 ♜c2 g5 puts the onus on White to demonstrate compensation, while 16...gxf5 17 gxf5 ♜h7 18 ♜h1 ♜g8! was also good for Black in Torres-David, Moscow 1994) 15...c4

#### see following diagram

16 ♜c2 gxf5 17 exf5 ♜b6+ (17...♜b7?! 18 a4 a6 19 ♜b1 ♜xd5 20 b6 ♜d7 21 a5 was careless in Michenka-Ivanov, Frydek Mistek 1995) 18 ♜h1 ♜xb5 19 ♜a4 ♜a6 20 ♜c6 ♜b7 21 ♜xb7 ♜xb7 and Black was well on

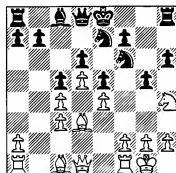


top in Unzicker-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1981.



11 f3 ♖a5 12 ♛c2 g5 13 ♘f5 ♘xf5 14 exf5 ♗d7 15 h4?! g4 16 fxg4 ♘g4 17 ♗c2 ♗g8 was the rather unwise (for White) course of Donner-Portisch, Skopje Olympiad 1972, which ended 18 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 19 ♗xh6 ♗xf5! 20 ♛xf5 ♛xc3+ 21 ♖f2 ♛b2+ 22 ♖e3 ♗xg2 0-1. White should really look to get his king to relative safety rather than invite unwelcome attention with 15 h4, so a more feasible line is 15 0-0 0-0-0 16 ♗b1 g4 17 fxg4 (17 f4 e4 18 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 19 ♛xe4 ♗de8 is unclear) 17...♘g4 18 f6!? when I prefer White, but there is considerable scope for improvement for both sides.

11...g5



Black seeks to punish White's move order by calling his opponent's bluff and inviting ♘f5.

12 ♛f3!

Gaining a tempo in the action area. Instead 12 ♘f5?! ♘xf5 13 exf5 e4 14 ♗c2 ♗xf5 15 f3 ♗g6 16 fxe4 ♘d7 followed by ...♘e5 looks nice for Black (note how the g5-pawn prevents ♗f4 here).

12...♘h7

This knight could well return to f6 later so it might not seem important where it goes now. For what it is worth the text provides a little extra support for g5 and leaves the rook free to move, but Black has also tried 12...♘fg8, when after 13 ♘f5 both captures are plausible. Milanovic-Knezevic, Yugoslav League 1993 continued 13...♗xf5 14 exf5 ♘f6 15 ♛h3 ♖d7! 16 g3 ♖c7 17 f4? e4 (17...gxf4 looks good) 18 ♗c2 g4!? 19 ♗xg4 h5 20 ♗d1 ♛d7 21 ♛h4 ♛xf5 with an edge for Black. Here White has an improvement in 15 ♗b1, e.g. 15...b6 16 ♗c2 with chances for both sides. This seems preferable for Black to 13...♘f5 14 exf5, when Graf-Gyimesi, Groningen 1999 should have favoured White had 14...♘f6 15 g4 ♛e7 16 ♗b1 ♖d8 17 ♛g3 ♖c7 been followed up with the immediate 18 ♗b2 followed by f2-f3 and swinging the rook over to the kingside.

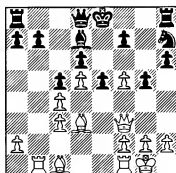
13 ♘f5 ♘xf5

13...♗xf5 14 exf5 ♘f6 leads to the previous note.

14 exf5 ♗d7

14...♘f6 is dealt with in the note to Black's 12th move.

15 ♗b1



While it does not exactly achieve anything, this familiar rook move is an important part of White's strategy in these lines as Black's reaction to the attack on b7 is sure to involve some kind of concession. Meanwhile, don't forget, there is now the added option of 'activating' the rook along the second rank.

**15...b6 16 ♖c2 ♚b8 17 a4 a5**

Ruling out a future a4-a5 and fixing White's pawn on a4 for the price of a backward pawn – also fixed – on b6. Without any available pawn breaks or apparent progress to be made on the queenside, White now turns to the other flank.

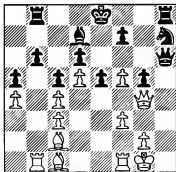
**18 h4!?** ♖f6

Short responds sensibly, although 18...gxf4 19 ♖xh6 ♖ff6 20 ♖d2 ♖d8 followed by ...♖c7 and ...♖g5 is also possible, when with b6 protected Black will be able to operate on the kingside.

**19 hxg5 hxg5 20 ♖g4!**

The nature of White's over-extension in this line means that he must tread carefully on the kingside if he is to avoid a blocked position that will facilitate Black's gradual generation of counterplay. Here, for example, 20 g4? looks natural but runs into 20...♖h6 21 ♖g2 ♖f6 when Black enjoys the greater control. The text seems to expose the queen but White is able to exert pressure on g5, giving him time to address the coming activity on the only open file.

**20...♖h6 21 f3**



**21...♖f6 22 ♖g3**

Not 22 ♖xg5?? ♖h2+ 23 ♖f2 ♚g8 24 ♖xf6 ♚xg2+ 25 ♖c1 ♚xc2 etc.

**22...♚g8 23 ♖e3 ♖d8 24 ♖f2**

Both sides find a haven for the kings before the fun begins on the h-file.

**24...♖c7 25 ♚h1 ♖g7 26 ♚h2**

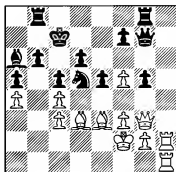
Dautov points out that 26 ♖c2 g4! 27 f4 e4 is not to be recommended for White.

**26...♖c8**

This time 26...g4 27 ♖h6 ♖h7 28 ♖g5 ♖g7 29 ♖h6 leads to a draw because ...gxf3 is not check. Short – predictably – is not ready to split the point in this complex situation. Therefore he turns his attention to the traditional weakness on c4 by way of a constructive retreat.

**27 ♚bh1 ♖a6 28 ♖b3?**

Keeping an eye on both a4 and c4, but White would do better with 28 ♖d3! according to Dautov, despite the fact that this invites 28...♖xd5



The point is that in taking on d5 Black drops his guard on h7, allowing 29 ♚h7 with an effective infiltration, e.g. 29...♖f8 30 ♖xg5 ♖xc3 31 ♖h4 is sufficiently messy to justify White's investment) 30 ♚h6 ♖e7 31 cxd5 (31 ♚e6!?) 31...♖xd3 32 ♚e6 ♖d7 33 ♚f6 ♚bf8 34 ♖g4 and the fun continues.

Of course Black can avoid this with 28...♚be8, when 29 ♖c2 g4 30 ♚h6 gxf3 31 ♖xg7 ♚xg7 32 gxf3 ♖d7 33 f6 favours

White, but 29...e4 30 f4 g4 31 ♖h6 (followed by ♖h4) is less clear.

**28...♖be8**

Now White's bishop has no influence on events in the centre and on the kingside, while the f5-pawn is friendless.

**29 ♖h6 g4**

White has the h-file but Black has the easier game thanks to this advance and the promise of charging with the e-pawn (which would cut White's connection with f5).

**30 ♖g1?**

It is difficult to know where the king is best placed here, but g1 turns out to be an inaccurate choice. Better is 30 ♖h2!? (Dautov), protecting g2, a square that comes under fire after 30 ♖h4?!, for example 30...gxf3 31 gxf3 ♖g2+ 32 ♖e1 ♕xd5 (32...♖xf3? 33 ♖h3) and White's position collapses.

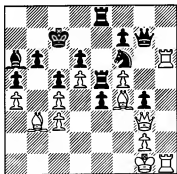
**30...e4 31 f4**

Black ignores 31 ♖f4? as 31...gxf3! 32 ♖xd6+ ♖d7 33 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 34 ♖xf6 ♖xg2+ 35 ♖f1 e3 is decisive, while 31 f4g4 ♖xg4 32 ♖f2 ♖g7! highlights which side owns the most useful minor piece.

**31...♕d7 32 f6**

A necessary pawn sacrifice. 32 ♖d2 e3! sees Black make considerable progress after either 33 ♖e1 ♕f6 or 33 f6 ♕xf6 34 ♖xe3 ♕e4.

**32...♕xf6 33 f5 ♖e5 34 ♖f4 ♖ge8!**



Again this is typical of Short's uncom-

promising style – perfectly suited to this variation, in fact. Also possible is 34...♖xf5 35 ♖xd6+ ♖b7 with the cheeky threat of ...♕xd5 in view of the check on f1 that would follow c4xd5. However, with the text Black is happy to part with the exchange (eventually) because the remaining forces combine better. As we will see, White is not too keen on surrendering his dark-squared bishop if this means leaving the terrible piece on b3 with a greater burden.

**35 ♖e3**

White is concerned about holding back the e-pawn, a problem well illustrated in the variation 35 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 36 ♖f4 (36 ♖e3 ♖xf5) 36...e3 37 ♖c2 e2 38 ♖f2 e1 ♖+! 39 ♖xe1 g3+ 40 ♖f1 ♕xd5! etc.

**35...♖xf5 36 g3 ♖ee5!**

Effectively making White an offer he cannot refuse.

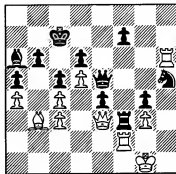
**37 ♖h2**

This time Black can reply to 37 ♖xe5 with 37...dxe5 38 ♖d2 ♖f3 when the incursion continues.

**37...♕h5 38 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 39 ♖f2**

Unfortunately for White the attempt to Hoover off to an ending with 39 ♖6xh5 ♖xh5 40 ♖xh5 ♖xh5 41 ♖xe4 fails to 41...♖e5! etc.

**39...♖f3!**



The net closes in.

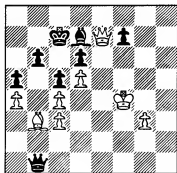
**40 ♖xf3 gxf3 41 ♖xh5 ♖xh5 42 ♖xe4**

The best practical chance, but the respec-

tive merits of the final set of minor pieces now comes into play.

42...♙c8 43 ♖f2 ♜h2+! 44 ♖xf3 ♜h1+ 45 ♖e3

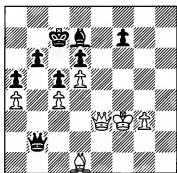
An amusing – and not inappropriate – finish would be 45 ♖f4 ♜c1+ 46 ♜e3? ♜b1 47 ♜e7+ ♙d7



The pawns on a4 and c4 have been brought the bishop down with them.

45...♜e1+ 46 ♖f3 ♜xc3+ 47 ♜e3 ♜b2 48 ♙d1 ♙d7

White is a pawn down and has further weaknesses to defend – a futile task.

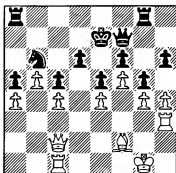


49 ♜e2 ♜h8 50 g4 ♜h3+ 51 ♖f4 f6 52 ♙c2 ♜c3 53 ♙d1 ♙d8 54 ♜c2 ♜d4+ 55 ♖g3 ♜g1+ 56 ♖f4 ♜f1+ 57 ♖e3

Dautov gives 57 ♙f3 ♜a1 58 ♙d1 ♜e5+ 59 ♖f3 ♖c7 60 ♜d3 ♜g5 61 ♜e4 f5! 62 gxf5 ♙xf5 63 ♜f4 ♜h5+ 64 ♖g3 ♜xd1 65 ♜xf5 ♜xa4 and Black wins.

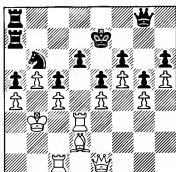
57...♜h3+ 58 ♖f4 ♜h4 59 ♙f3 f5 60 ♜d1 ♖c7 61 ♙e2 fxf4 62 ♙xf4 ♜f6+ 63 ♖g3 ♜c3+ 64 ♖g2 ♜xc4 0-1

A powerful performance from Black. It is true that for the first phase of the opening in this variation White does call the shots, but the structure and Black's extra knight make for a potentially cut-throat battle.



Here is what could be described as a Hübner structure stand-off. With the exception of the h-pawn, the pawns can advance no further, the b5-pawn is blockaded and both sides must make sure to offer their weak pawns protection (a4, c4 and even e4 for White, and a5 and d6 for Black). We are following the game Bogdanov-Titz, Graz 2001 which, thus far, is 31 moves long, and the layout of pawns is by no means a complete surprise in this variation. The prospect of opening the kingside (with ...h6-h5) looks quite unappealing for White with his king being slightly the worse of the two and the need to defend a4 and c4 tying up the queen and rook. Consequently there followed 32 h5 which put an end to any hope of opening the game and left the players with a total of fourteen pawns in front of them and not a single pawn break. Whichever side of the board you'll be sitting on it is worth contemplating characteristically blocked positions and their implications, and how they might take form as the game progresses. In the diagram position the more vulnerable pawns have been

taken care of, but a failure to appreciate that these might become the most critical factors could prove disastrous. Anyway, just to emphasise the point regarding the likelihood of having to split the actual point, here is how the game 'ended'... 32...♔g8 33 ♖d3 ♜ac8 34 ♖f1 ♖e8 35 ♖e1 ♜b7 36 ♜e3 ♜f7 37 ♜b3 ♜a8 38 ♜cc3 ♜b7 39 ♖d2 ♖e7 40 ♖c2 ♖e8 41 ♖b2 ♖e7 42 ♜d1 ♜c7 43 ♖b3 ♜b7 44 ♜cd3 ♜c7 45 ♜e2 ♜ac8 46 ♜ed2 ♜a8 47 ♜e1 ♜d7 48 ♜c2 ♜b7 49 ♜e2 ♜c7 50 ♜c1 ♜b7 51 ♜cd1 ♜c7 52 ♜d2 ♜b8 53 ♜e1 ♜g8 54 ♜c1 ♜da7



Nothing has altered since the point at which we joined the game, other than a migration to the queenside to secure a4 and a5. By now, perhaps having found something more interesting to do, the protagonists had decided that was enough, and agreed a draw.

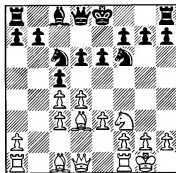
### Fluid Centre

Blocked positions are not to everyone's taste, so the next game features examples in which White avoids closing the centre, opening up the game for the bishop pair or at least leaving some room in which to manoeuvre.

*Game 14*  
**Lugovoi-Aseev**  
*Russian Championship 1996*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♖b4 4 e3 c5 5

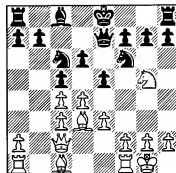
♙d3 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♙xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 8 0-0



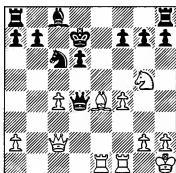
It is still possible for White to close the centre with this move order, but castling instead of 8 e4 tends to be a sign that White is looking for more fluidity.

8...e5 9 ♘d2

Popular – and similar should White then put the knight on e4 – is 9 ♘g5, which looks blunt but adds the e4-square to White's options, eyes h7 (for what that is worth) and, importantly, frees the f-pawn. Then 9...♜c7 10 ♜c2 leads to the following position:



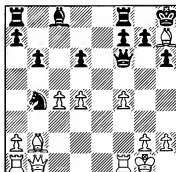
While it is true that White's play is not unlike what we would expect from a schoolboy during his lunch-break, Black has to be careful here. For example 10...cxd4? 11 exd4 exd4 12 ♙d2 opens the centre to White's considerable advantage, as does 10...♘g4? 11 f4 exf4 12 cxf4 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘c3 14 ♙xc3 ♜xc3+ 15 ♖h1 ♜xd4 16 ♜ae1+ ♖d7 17 ♙e4



White had an almost embarrassing advantage in Zelevinsky-Chepkukaitis, Leningrad 1967. Notice that 15... $\text{Qxd4}$ ? 16  $\text{Wc3}$  is way too risky for Black (who can't castle in view of  $\text{Qxh7+}$ , picking up the queen), e.g. 16... $\text{Qc6}$  17  $\text{Nae1}$  or 16... $\text{g4}$  17  $\text{Nae1}$   $\text{Qe2}$  18 c5!? (threatening  $\text{Qb5+}$  and  $\text{Wxc3}$ ) 18...0-0 19  $\text{Nxc2}$   $\text{Qxc2}$  20  $\text{Qf5+}$ . Even 10... $\text{Qd7}$ ?, which anticipates White's next and prepares to send the king to 'safety' over on the queenside, leads to a more pleasant game for White after 11 f4 0-0-0 (11... $\text{exf4}$ ? 12  $\text{exf4}$  h6 13  $\text{Qf3}$  0-0 14  $\text{Nc1}$   $\text{Wd8}$  15  $\text{Nb1}$  helped only White in Veltmänder-Heinrich, Correspondence 1961) 12  $\text{fxe5}$   $\text{dxe5}$  13 d5  $\text{Qa5}$  14 e4 h6 15  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qe8}$  16  $\text{Wf2}$ ! (reminding Black of the potential targets on c5 and f7) 16...b6 17  $\text{Qd2}$ !, as in Sande-Tiller, Norway 1980, which was awkward for Black, who can quickly come undone on the queenside after 17...f6 18  $\text{Qb3}$   $\text{Qb7}$  19 a4 a5 20  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Qed6}$ ? 21  $\text{Qxc5}$ !  $\text{bxc5}$  22  $\text{Qxc5}$  and the floodgates open. A more appropriate setup of the pieces is with 17... $\text{f8!}$ ? 18  $\text{Qb3}$   $\text{Qb7}$  19 a4 a5 20  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Qc7}$ .

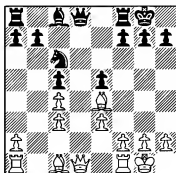
Black's best is the forcing 10...h6, when 11  $\text{Qe4}$   $\text{Qxe4}$  12  $\text{Qxe4}$  0-0 13  $\text{dxc5}$  (13  $\text{Nb1}$   $\text{exd4}$  14  $\text{exd4}$   $\text{Wf6}$  15  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Nc8}$ ! was unclear in Danner-Vilela, Lucerne Olympiad 1982) 13... $\text{dxc5}$  14  $\text{Qd5}$   $\text{Qe6}$  15 e4  $\text{Nac8}$  16 f4! (16  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Qa5}$  17  $\text{We2}$   $\text{Nfe8}$  18  $\text{Nfd1}$  b6 with equality, Keene-Csom, European Team Championship 1980) 16... $\text{exf4}$  17  $\text{Qxf4}$   $\text{Qa5}$

18  $\text{Wd3}$   $\text{Nfe8}$  19  $\text{Nae1}$  b6 20  $\text{Qc3}$  gave White a little something in Danner-Spiridonov, Albena 1983. Also possible is 11...0-0 12 f4  $\text{exd4}$  13  $\text{Qxf6+}$   $\text{Wxf6}$  14  $\text{exd4}$   $\text{cxd4}$  15  $\text{Qb2}$ ! b6! 16  $\text{cxd4}$ !  $\text{Qb4}$  17  $\text{Qh7+}$   $\text{Qh8}$  18  $\text{Wb1}$



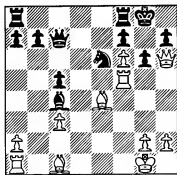
White's bishops and extra space seem to amount to an advantage (18...g6?? 19 d5 would do the trick) but Psakhis and Vaissier finish the line off 18...d5! 19 a3  $\text{Qc6}$  20  $\text{cxd5}$   $\text{Qe7}$  (20... $\text{Qxd4}$ ? 21  $\text{Nf2}$ ) 21  $\text{Qe4}$   $\text{Qb7}$  22 d6  $\text{Qd5}$  (22... $\text{Qxc4}$  23  $\text{Wxc4}$   $\text{Wxd6}$  looks equal) 23 a4 with equality. This is a typical example of how the game unfolds when one side endeavours to clear lines and is willing to part with a pawn, the 'defender' instead offers a sacrifice of his own in order to maintain the status quo and the result is equality.

The main line with 9  $\text{Qg5}$  runs 9...0-0 10 f4, but first 10  $\text{dxc5}$ ?  $\text{dxc5}$  11  $\text{Qe4}$   $\text{Qxe4}$  12  $\text{Qxe4}$  deserves our attention:



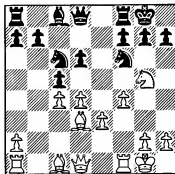
White has doubled, isolated and blockaded c-pawns but the idea is not to wait around for this to become a factor, rather to continue prising open the centre. The first of Black's responses to spring to mind is the exchange of queens, after which White's attacking prospects should be reduced and the significance of the structure should be increased. However, after 12...♖xd1 13 ♖xd1 ♕e6 14 ♕a3 (14 ♕d5 ♖a5!) 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc5 (15 ♗d7 f5 16 ♗xc6 bxc6 17 ♗c5 ♗f7 is level) 15...♞fd8 16 a4 the collective efforts of the bishop pair outweigh White's separated pawns.

I don't see anything wrong with 12...♕e6 but, once again, psychology plays an important role in the diagram position. The fact that ...♖xd1 seems to favour White suggests Black should avoid the stand-off on the d-file, while there is also ♗xc6 – damaging Black's pawns – to consider, when a draw is almost inevitable. Consequently in Kaczorowski-Hera, Budapest 1998 Black elected to play 12...♖c7, no doubt figuring that his long-term advantage would outstay White's hoped for initiative... 13 f4 exf4 (13...♕e6!?) 14 exf4 ♕e6? (this is asking for trouble, but it is easy to dismiss 14...f5 15 ♕d5+ ♖h8 on the grounds that it locks in the c8-bishop, although the c1-bishop is poor too) 15 f5! ♗xc4 16 f6! g6 (16...♗xf1 17 ♗xh7+! ♖xh7 18 ♖h5+ ♖g8 19 ♖g5 g6 20 ♖h6) 17 ♖d2 ♖d8 (17...♗xf1 18 ♖h6) 18 ♖h6 ♕e6 19 ♞f5!



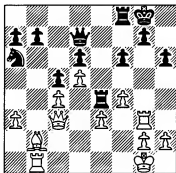
White threatens 20 ♞h5! (also possible was 19 ♞f3! ♞fd8 20 ♕f4). Of the two strategies, White's more immediate approach has been successful (with Black's king under tremendous pressure), and it is this direct, positive attitude that is important in the aggressive, fluid, 'open' version of the Hübner Variation. Now 19...♖d8 20 ♕e3 (20 ♞h5?? ♖d1+) 20...♕e2 21 ♞e1 ♕g4 22 ♞g5 ♖xf6 23 ♞xg4 ♖xc3 24 ♞c1 is decisive, so the game went 19...♕e2 20 ♕f4 ♖d7 (20...♖d8 and 20...♖a5 both meet with 21 ♕d5) 21 ♞d5 ♖a4 22 ♞d6! and White was finally able to attack the lynchpin of Black's defence, Black resigning after 22...♞fd8 23 ♞xe6 ♞d1+ 24 ♖f2. White's attack was surprisingly effective in this game, and I would not be surprised to see Black's problems repeated at club level where, by the time White's theme is fully appreciated it could be too late.

Anyway, the more popular (9 ♖g5) 9...0-0 10 f4 is also a no-nonsense line, stepping up the pace in the centre by introducing another potential open line, as well as contesting Black's 'dark-squared' wall of pawns. Play tends to continue 10...exd4 (Black prefers to keep the pawn on f4; the alternative 10...exf4 11 ♞xf4 h6 12 ♞xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♖h7 ♖e7 14 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 15 ♕d2 f6 16 ♖e2 ♕d7 17 ♞f1 ♕e8 18 ♖g4 ♕f7 19 ♞f3 ♞d8 20 ♞g3 ♕g8 left Black passive but reasonably solid in Knaak-Enders, Fuerstenwalde 1981) 11 cxd4



It is important to take stock here rather

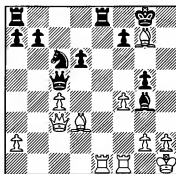
than after the automatic 11...cxd4 (see below) because Black has a logical alternative to further clearing the centre (which is White's plan, after all). Much of the play in these lines revolves around the d4-square, either because Black is often unable to win a pawn there for tactical reasons or because the opening of the long diagonal is to White's benefit. However, after 11...h6 12 ♖f3 ♜e8! it is the e4-square that is the focus of attention, the (positional) downside of White's aggressive pawn advances being the creation of a backward pawn and the accompanying hole in front of it. Babula-Haba, Zlin 1997 is a good example of how clamping down on e4 can be awkward for White: 13 d5 ♖b4 14 ♖b1 and this position is assessed as slightly favourable for White in NCO, perhaps because the bishops can have Black's kingside in their sights. In the game 14...♗e4 15 ♖b2 ♖f5 16 a3 ♗a6 17 ♗d2 ♗xd2 18 ♖xf5? ♗xc4 19 ♜f2 ♗xb2 (19...♗xe3!? 20 ♜d3 ♗xf5 21 ♜xf5 ♗c7 22 ♜g4 f6) 20 ♖xb2 ♜f6 21 ♜b1 ♜ab8 22 ♜c2 ♗c7 was terrible for White, but even the improvement suggested by Psakhis leaves Black with the better game after 18 ♜xd2 ♖xb1 19 ♜c3 f6 20 ♜axb1 ♜e4 21 ♜f3 ♜d7 22 ♜g3 ♜f8



We can see the e4-square is still an issue, all the more so now that White's forces are less able to deal with the weakness than earlier. As soon as it is established, Black's grip on e4 cannot be properly contested, and this

is a definite problem for White that doesn't look like being remedied. Incidentally, apart from the natural occupation of e4 after 14 ♖b1 Black also has an equally promising, thematic possibility in 14...b5!?, e.g. 15 a3 ♗a6 16 cxb5 ♗c7 17 a4 ♗cxd5 18 ♜a3 ♖b7 19 ♜e1 ♖b4, when Black's Benko-like recouping of the pawn investment secured an edge in Villeneuve-Boudre, Val Maubuec 1988. This does indeed look like a nice idea for Black, which adds weight to the notion that 11...h6 could well hold more promise than taking on d4, to which we now turn.

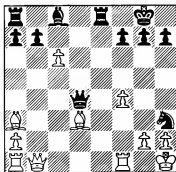
After 11...cxd4 12 exd4 White gets what he wants and Black has to be careful, although even here the second player should be doing okay. For example 12...♗xd4 13 ♖b2 (13 ♗xh7 ♗xh7 14 ♖xh7+ ♗xh7 15 ♜xd4 ♜f6 is equal) 13...♗f5 14 ♜c2 ♗e3 15 ♖xh7+ ♗h8 16 ♜d3 ♗xf1 17 ♜xf1 is greedy and puts Black's king under too much pressure, e.g. 17...♖g4 18 ♖e4! and the material lead is hardly relevant, or 17...d5 18 ♗h1! and the onus is again on Black to defend, Kuuksmaa-Uogele, Correspondence 1984. With 12...♜b6 Black intends to pick up the c-pawn with the more aggressive queen, but in Al Sayed-Mithrakanth, Moscow 1994 Black again came to regret opening the long diagonal: 13 ♖b1 ♜xd4+ 14 ♗h1 ♖g4 15 ♜c2 h6 16 ♖b2 ♜e3 17 ♖xf6 hgx5 18 ♜c3 ♜fe8 (White threatened to win the queen with ♖h7+) 19 ♜be1 ♜c5 20 ♖xg7





In an ideal world this is the kind of position White is aiming for when he starts to strike at Black's centre and on the dark squares. The game ended 20...gxf4 (20...fxe1 21 fxe1 ♖f2 22 ♖h8, e.g. 22...♗e5 23 fxe5 ♗xh8 24 ♖f1! followed by e5-e6+ etc.) 21 ♖ff6! ♗xe1 22 ♖h7+! with mate to follow.

It would be more logical to leave the d4-pawn well alone for the time being and instead act more methodically in the centre by pushing the d-pawn. 12...d5 is typical – 13 ♖a3 ♗e8 14 ♖b1 ♗e4 (14...g6 15 f5; 14...h6? 15 ♖h7+) 15 cxd5 ♗xg5 16 dxc6 ♖xd4+ 17 ♗h1 ♗h3

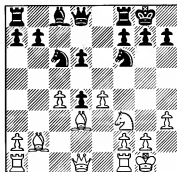


Now, instead of 18 gxf3 ♖e6 19 ♖xh7+ ♗h8 20 ♖e4 ♖d5 21 ♖g2 ♗e2 22 ♗g1 ♖d2 23 ♖f1 bxc6 when White was tied up in Flear-Lobron, Paris 1983, 18 ♖c2 ♗f2+ 19 ♖xf2 ♖xd3 20 ♗fe1 ♗xe1+ 21 ♗xe1 h6 would have been very slightly better for White, although the signs are that once his 'activity' ends the game will be heading for a draw.

Alternatively Black can throw in 12...h6 13 ♗f3 (note that here White has the less compromising 13 d5!) 13...d5, which could have come about via 11...h6 12 ♗f3 cxd4 13 exd4. Then 14 ♗e5 dxc4 15 ♖xc4 ♖e6 16 ♖xe6 fxe6 17 ♖a3 ♗e8 is equal. Finally there is (12...h6 13 ♗f3) 13...♖g4 14 d5 ♗d4 15 ♖b2 ♗xf3+ 16 gxf3 ♖h3 when NCO gives 17 ♗f2 – which has been tried a little without success – as unclear, while Hansen offers

Pliester's 17 ♗h1! ♖xf1 18 ♖xf1, one line being 18...♗h5 19 ♖g2 f5 20 ♗g1 'with a strong attack' – this does look like an improvement but Black's kingside doesn't look that bad, e.g. 20...♗f7 21 ♖g6 ♖b6 22 ♖xf5 ♗xf5 23 ♖xf5 ♖xb2 24 ♖xh5 ♖c3 and White's king is the more exposed and his extra pawn means nothing, or 22 ♖c1 ♗xf4 23 ♖xf4 ♖d4 24 ♖xf5 ♖xf4 25 ♖e6 (25 ♖h7+ ♗f8 26 ♖h8+ ♗e7 27 ♖e1+? [27 ♖xa8] 27...♗f6 28 ♖e6+ ♗g5) 25...♖xf3+ 26 ♗g2 ♖f1+ etc.

Before moving on to 9 ♗d2 I should mention 9 e4!, which challenges Black to get busy on d4: 9...cxd4 (9...0-0, in turn, invites – or hopes for – a transposition to the main – closed centre – line with 10 d5, but White can be consistently stubborn thanks to 10 ♖c3!, intending to meet 10...♗g4 with 11 ♖g5) 10 cxd4 cxd4 11 h3 0-0 12 ♖b2



Aleksandrov-V.Milov, Saint Vincent 2000 went 12...♖b6 13 ♖b1 ♖c5 14 ♗d2 ♗e8 15 f4 a5 16 ♖f3 a4 17 ♖a1 ♖a5 18 ♗fe1 ♗d7 19 ♗h1 ♖h5 20 ♖f2 ♗c5 21 ♖f1 ♖h6 with chances for both sides, White deciding the time was right to change gear with 22 e5!.

Exerting pressure on d4 rather than grabbing a pawn there with 10...♖g4! has also been recommended. Then 11 d5 ♗d4 12 ♖a4+ ♖d7 13 ♖d1 ♖g4 is a feasible way to end the game peacefully, while 12 ♗h1! 0-0 13 ♖c3 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♖h3 (14...♖h5!?) 15 ♗g1 ♗h5 is a different prospect altogether,

White given the choice of the proactive 16 f4!?  $\text{Qxf4}$  17  $\text{Qxf4}$  exf4 18  $\text{Wh5}$  or making his presence felt on the other flank with 16 c5 etc.

With  $\text{Qd2}$  White clears the f-pawn, introduces the possibility of a convenient  $\text{Qe4}$  as opposed to being hit with ...h7-h6 in the case of  $\text{Qg5}$  and presents himself with the option of sending the knight to b3, should this become relevant. Additionally, dropping the knight back does not preclude switching to the closed centre complex, where the d2-square fits in okay.

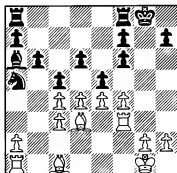
### 9...0-0

Since castling is going to come at some point Black plays it now, waiting until he has a better idea of White's strategy before committing himself elsewhere. 9... $\text{We7}$  has also been played, but the queen then deprives the queen's knight of the traditional retreat square, thus prompting White to push with 10 d5. Then 10... $\text{Qb8}$  11 e4  $\text{Qbd7}$  12  $\text{Ne1}$  0-0 13  $\text{Qf1}$  gives White a superior Hübner, e.g. 13... $\text{Qe8}$  14  $\text{Qg3}$  g6 15  $\text{Qh6}$   $\text{Qg7}$  16  $\text{Wd2}$  f6 17 h4 with a nice initiative in Vaganian-Yusupov, Barcelona World Cup 1989, or 12... $\text{Qf8}$  13  $\text{Qf1}$   $\text{Qg6}$  14  $\text{Qg3}$  with a clear advantage – Vaganian. This is best avoided, which is why Black has also tried the reactionary 10...e4 11  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Qxe4}$  12 dxc6 bxc6, as in Lugovoi-Shaposhnikov, St Petersburg 2000 where, instead of 13 f3  $\text{Qf6}$  14 e4  $\text{Qd7}$  15  $\text{Wa4}$   $\text{Qb6}$  16  $\text{Wxc6+}$   $\text{Qd7}$  17  $\text{Wb7}$  0-0 18  $\text{Qa6}$ , which rather awkwardly won a pawn, White could have taken the more direct route with 13  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Wxc4}$  14  $\text{Wxd6}$ .

### 10 $\text{Nb1}$

White, too, can wait a while, the b-file being a natural posting. Meanwhile, the tension remains. Reverting to the closed centre with 10 d5 is an option, although 10... $\text{Qe7}$  11 f4!? was unsuccessful in Karanikolas-Papaioannou, Athens 1996, 11...exf4 12 exf4  $\text{Qf5}$  13  $\text{Wc2}$   $\text{Wd7}$  14  $\text{Qf3}$   $\text{Qac8}$  15  $\text{Qd2}$   $\text{Qxd3}$  16  $\text{Wxd3}$   $\text{Wf5}$  accentuating the weakness of both the c4-pawn and the c4-square.

Note that the position after 10  $\text{Qe4}$  can also be reached via the 9  $\text{Qg5}$  alternative. If Black is interested in no more than a draw then he could try 10... $\text{Qxe4}$  11  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Wh4}$ . Otherwise there is 10...b6!? 11  $\text{Wf3}$   $\text{Qb7}$ , when 12  $\text{Qxf6+}$   $\text{Wxf6}$  13  $\text{Wxf6}$  gxf6 14 f4! (14 d5? and 14  $\text{Qe4}$  both meet with 14... $\text{Qa5}$ ) 14... $\text{Qa5}$  15 e4  $\text{Qa6}$  16  $\text{Qf3}$  leads to the following position:

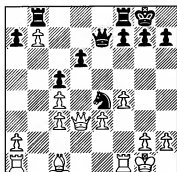


White's c4-pawn is under fire (surprise, surprise) but we are following a line of Anand's, who believes that White's activity – helped by Black's own structural damage on the other flank – is enough to make up for this traditional problem. We don't have to take Vishy's word for it, of course, but a brief examination of the current position does indeed highlight the potential problems Black might experience on the dark squares. For example White already threatens 17 fxe5 fxe5 18  $\text{Qh6}$ , but 16...exf4 fails to help and 16...exd4 will soon lead to White's bishop taking up a fantastic post on the a1-h8 diagonal, e.g. 16...exd4 17 cxd4  $\text{Qxc4}$  18 dxc5 dxc5 19  $\text{Bg3+}$   $\text{Qh8}$  20  $\text{Qb2}$  and the 'extra' bishop finally tells.

An alternative development of Black's remaining bishop is 10... $\text{Qf5}$ ? (which does not blunder a pawn to 11  $\text{Qxc5}$ ? in view of 11...e4). In the event of 11  $\text{Qxf6+}$   $\text{Wxf6}$  12 e4  $\text{Qd7}$  13 d5  $\text{Qe7}$  14  $\text{Nb1}$  b6 White drifts into a slight disadvantage after settling for 15 f3  $\text{Wg6}$  16 a4 in view of 16...f5 17 a5 fxe4 18

♙xe4 ♙f5 19 ♚c1 ♚c8 etc. Note how White's dark-squared bishop has no role to play, which would definitely not be the case after the aggressive 15 f4!?, when I prefer White, whose menacing play on the kingside is a necessary distraction.

This leaves 11 ♜g3 ♜g6 (11...♙xd3 is approximately even) 12 d5, when dropping back to e7 looks compact but leaves Black poorly placed to deal with f2-f4 because the knight cannot come to g6. Consequently Tella-Yakovich, Stockholm 1999 continued 12...e4 13 ♚xe4 ♙xe4 14 ♙xe4 ♚xe4 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 f3 ♚f6 17 e4 with weaknesses for both sides. Instead of 13 ♚xe4 White can also try 13 dxc6? exd3 14 f4? ♙e4 (14...♚e4?? 15 f5) 15 ♚xe4 ♚xe4 16 cxb7 ♚b8 17 ♚xd3 ♚e7



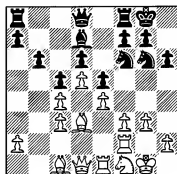
This situation should serve as a warning to White as to the dangers of giving away the e4-square when the only minor piece left in play is the dark-squared bishop. Black's knight is enormous, the bishop is tiny. Not surprisingly this line has been assessed as good for Black. However, with this fundamental positional theme in mind, White does better to address the well placed enemy bishop by closing it out rather than chasing it, and I am surprised that 14 cxb7 ♚b8 15 f3! ♚xb7 16 e4 is not the recommended course, the point being to bolster the centre (instead of surrendering e4) and to provide White's own bishop with some breathing space. In

fact White's extra pawn will be significant after ♚xd3 as d6 will prove as weak as c4, while with 16...d5 17 cxd5 c4 Black manages to hang on to d3 but White has a protected passed pawn of his own, and is still a pawn up.

**10...b6**

10...♚c7 is slightly different to 9...♚c7, the queen again occupying the knight's natural retreat square in the case of 11 d5, but this time Black's king has left the centre so that 11...e4 (11...♚b8 12 e4 ♚bd7 13 ♚e1 gives White an edge) 12 ♚xe4 ♚xe4 13 dxc6 bxc6 makes more sense (13...♚xc3? 14 cxb7 ♙xb7 15 ♚xb7 ♚xb7 16 ♚c2), 14 ♚c2 ♚e8! 15 f3 ♚f6 16 e4 ♚d7 17 ♙f4 ♚e5 18 ♜g3 f6 19 ♚fd1 ♙e6 20 ♙f1! giving White an edge thanks to the bishop pair in Ibragimov-Kiriakov, Groningen 1997.

I don't like 10...♚e8, which practically 'forces' White to close, 11 d5 ♚e7 12 e4 showing Black that his rook would now be better back on f8. Bareev-Short, Geneva 1996 went 12...b6 13 ♚b2 ♚g6 14 ♚e1 ♚f8 (there it goes) 15 ♚f1 ♜g4 16 f3 ♙d7 17 g3 h6 18 ♚f2

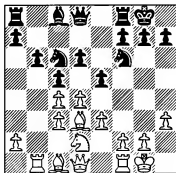


18...♚b8 19 ♚c3 a6 20 ♚f5 and White was making progress on the kingside. Note how White's rook slotted in nicely here.

Incidentally, 10...cxd4 11 exd4 exd4 12 cxd4 ♚xd4 is not a mistake from Black, but of course this opening of lines is exactly what White is looking for.

The text is played as much with the b-file in mind as finding a home for the bishop on b7 or a6.

11 h3!



Both the move itself and the accompanying '!' might come as a surprise. You will notice that the carrot is still being dangled in front of Black in the shape of the d4-pawn and, should Black feel like a snack, then covering g4 comes in useful, as we will see.

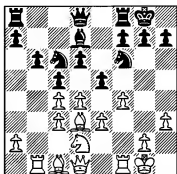
11...♙d7

11...♙a6 12 d5 ♘a5 (12...♘d5 13 cxd5 ♙xd3 14 dxc6 is interesting) 13 e4 g6 14 ♖b3! was seen in Wu Shaobin-Ardiansyah, Singapore 1997, the point being to exploit the pin after 14...♘xc4? 15 ♖c2 b5 16 a4 etc. Instead there followed 14...♘d7 15 ♙h6 ♚e8 16 ♘d2 ♗h4 17 ♙e3 with the better game for White, who has c4 under control and chances of using the space advantage and long-term influence on the dark squares. The advantage grew to the 'clear' category thanks to Black's pre-emptive but ambitious kingside strike: 17...f5? 18 exf5 e4 19 g3! ♗xh3 20 ♘xe4 and now the dark squares really were a problem. Since ...♙a6 seems to lack bite (unless Black is prepared to part with all his minor pieces after 12 d5 ♘xd5) and the a8-h1 diagonal might prove fruitless, Black prefers to keep his bishop in touch with both flanks.

12 f4!

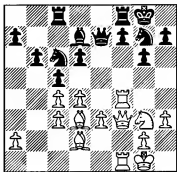
White finally grasps the nettle with a chal-

lenge designed to open lines, offering (once more) the d-pawn in the process.



12...exd4

Black rises to the challenge, helping to steer the focus of the struggle to the middle of the board. White must also consider the alternative capture: 12...exf4 13 ♚xf4 ♗e7 14 ♗f3 ♚ac8 15 ♘f1 ♘e8 (15...♘a5 16 d5 simply leaves the knight poorly placed on a5) 16 ♘g3 g6 17 ♙d2 ♘g7 18 ♚f1



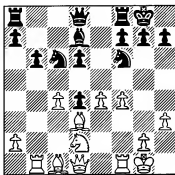
We are following I.Sokolov-Winants, Netherlands 1995. For much of the opening stage White tempted his opponent with the d4-pawn, but the exchange of the f-pawn for the one on e5 has simultaneously left d4 perfectly safe and White able to post all three major pieces on the f-file. In fact the immediate threat is to lodge the rook on f6 and meet ...♘e8 with ♘e4, again hitting Black on the dark squares – hence Black's next: 18...f5

19 e4 ♖e6 (19...cxd4 20 exf5 is poor for Black, while 19...♗e5! 20 dxe5 dxe5 nets the rook but affords White ample compensation after 21 ♖xf5 gxf5 22 exf5 ♙c6 23 ♖g4) 20 exf5 ♗xf4 21 ♙xf4 cxd4 22 ♖d5+ ♗g7 23 ♙xd6 ♖e3+ 24 ♗h2 ♙f6 (24...♙f7 25 ♙f3 ♖e1 26 cxd4 is a lesser evil, although Black is in trouble) 25 ♙f4 ♖e8 26 fxg6 hxg6 27 ♙h6+ and White won.

**13 cxd4 cxd4**

Consistent. The alternatives reveal a major reason for inserting ♙b1 into the proceedings. 13...♗b4?! 14 ♖xb4! cxb4 15 e4 gives White a formidable wall of pawns, while Pliester-Van den Doel, Dutch League 1995 produced a superior version for Black after 13...♙e8 14 ♖f3 ♖e7 15 d5 ♗b4 16 ♖xb4 cxb4 17 e4, although 17...b5 18 cxb5 ♙ab8 19 a4 a6 20 ♙b2 axb5 21 a5 ♙c8 22 e5 improved White's prospects. The exchange sacrifice on b4 leads to complicated play, which White must be happy with if he is to use this specific line.

**14 e4**



For the price of a pawn White has succeeded in giving the game a more open character while simultaneously keeping the centre closed on his own terms. Black has no pawn breaks but must himself monitor and consider the implications of e4-e5. Meanwhile Black can play neither ...♗b4 nor ...♗g4-e3 (thanks to 11 h3!). Nevertheless this is not to say that White is better, rather there is com-

pensation in the form of extra space, the bishop pair (dark squares) and the makings of an initiative.

**14...♙e8**

The next couple of moves, from both sides, are aimed at the crucial e5-square.

**15 ♙e1 ♖c7 16 ♗f3 ♙c6**

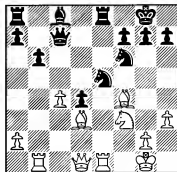
Planning to regroup with ...♗d7, further monitoring e5 and perhaps later allowing for a more positive approach in ...♙b7 and ...♗c5.

**17 e5!?**

Striking while the iron is reasonably hot.

**17...dxe5 18 fxe5 ♗d7**

18...♗xe5? 19 ♖xe5?! ♙xe5 20 ♗xe5 (not 20 ♙f4? ♖e1+ 21 ♖xe1 ♖xf4) 20...♙xe5 21 ♖f3 ♖b8 22 ♙f4 ♖b7 23 ♖g3 is unclear but 19 ♙f4! is a different story:



Trying to maintain e5 with 19...♗fd7? fails to 20 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♖h5, so 19...♗xf3+ 20 ♖xf3 ♖xe1+ is forced (20...♖b7? 21 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 22 ♙e4), 21 ♖xe1 ♖b7 22 ♖g3 leading to the same situation as 19 ♙xe5!?, above, but with White's rook already on the open e-file. Kantsler then gives 22...♙c6 23 ♙e5 ♖e7 (23...♗e8 24 ♙e4) 24 ♖h4 in a sideline, but this looks like Black's best to me. Instead he concentrates on the more entertaining 22...♖c6 23 ♙h6 g6 (23...♗h5 24 ♙e4 ♗xg3 25 ♙xc6 ♙c6 26 ♙xa8 gxf6 27 ♙d5) 24 ♙e4 ♗xe4 25 ♖e5 ♗f6 (25...f6 26 ♖e7) 26 ♖xf6! etc.

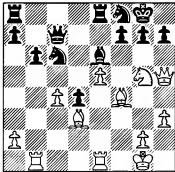
**19 ♙f4 ♗f8**

19...dxc5 20 dxc5 dxc5 21 ♖h5.

20 d g5

Threatening 21 e6 ♖xf4 22 exf7+ etc.

20...♙e6 21 ♖h5



21...h6

Black prefers to avoid 21...g6 22 ♖h6 followed by d e4 etc.

22 d f3

White should not carelessly surrender e5 with 22 d e4? d g6.

22...f5!?

Returning the pawn in order to eliminate a key attacking piece and thus alleviate some of the pressure. Such a policy is typical of strong GMs, albeit not always necessary, and here Black could consider improving his forces with 22...♙ad8.

23 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 24 ♖xf5 d e6 25 ♙d2 ♖d7

Preparing to challenge the enemy queen on the diagonal rather than see the active retreat that follows 25...♖f7 26 ♖g4.

26 ♙b5!? d c5

26...d e7 27 ♖g4.

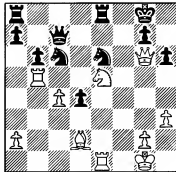
27 e6!

Once again White strives for an initiative.

27...dxc6?

27...♙xc6? runs into 28 ♙xc5, but 27...♖e7! 28 ♖d5 is preferable for Black compared with the game continuation.

28 d e5! ♖c7 29 ♖g6



Toying with both ♙xh6 and d g4 etc.

29...dxc5

29...a6 30 ♙d5 ♙e7 31 dxc6 ♖xc6 32 ♙de5 ♙ae8 33 ♙b4.

30 ♙bxe5 ♖f7 31 ♙xe6 ♖xg6 32 ♙xg6 ♙xe1+ 33 ♙xe1 ♙c8 34 ♙d6 ♙xc4

Black has two pawns for the piece but the White's fire-power decides.

35 ♙f2 ♙a4 36 ♙xd4 ♙xa2 37 ♙d8+ ♙f7

37...♙h7 38 ♙d7.

38 ♙d7+ ♙e6 39 ♙xg7 h5 40 ♙h7 ♙d5 41 ♙f2 ♙c4 42 ♙xh5 1-0

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 4...0-0: White Plays 5 ♖e2



1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 ♟e6 3 ♟c3 ♟b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♟e2

There is nothing particularly interesting for White about this variation but I can see it gaining in popularity in the future, along with other lines involving an early ♟e2.

It is worth noting that it is possible for White to have a psychologically 'tidy' system involving 5 ♟e2 against all three of Black's main lines, but each will lead to a quite different middlegame flavour.

#### *Game 15* **Malakhov-P.Nielsen** *Istanbul 2003*

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 ♟e6 3 ♟c3 ♟b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♟e2

Whatever your playing strength, 5 ♟e2 can be an attractive proposition in several ways. In most cases the general build-up of the game offers an opportunity (for both players, of course) to outplay the opponent. White should be able to develop in a tidy fashion, the pinned knight is supported in order (in many cases) to have ♟xc3 as an additional option to the recapture with the b-pawn (thus avoiding doubled pawns) and the knight is also ready to come to g3 or f4 when appropriate. Of course the downside is the

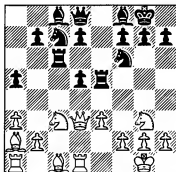
obstruction of the light-squared bishop, and this is why many players prefer to preface ♟e2 with ♟d3 (see the next main game, Pham Minh Hoang-Nguyen Anh Dung). However, in an age when we are bombarded with theory, there will be a growing number of players – not only at club level – who plan to meet virtually anything with 5 ♟e2.

#### 5...d5

Of the alternatives, 5...♞e8!? is an independent line worth a brief look. After 6 a3 ♟f8 the set-up on either side of the board is yet to take shape so the canvas is fairly blank, and there is no reason why Black should not find a playable game.

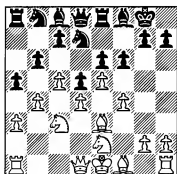
7 d5 grabs more space. Then 7...d6 8 g3 exd5 9 cxd5 c5 gives the structure a Benoni character which White can do away with by taking en passant: 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 ♟g2 d5 12 0-0 ♟bd7 13 ♞c2 ♟e5 14 ♞d1, Epishin-Wells, Ohrid 2001. Wells gives 14...♟g4 15 h3 ♟f3!? as an interesting positionally oriented option, while the game went 14...♞b6 15 h3 (15 ♟a4 ♞a6 16 ♟d4 ♟g4 17 f3 ♟h5 keeps Black active) 15...g6!, the threat of ...♟f5 (16 ♟d4?! c5) maintaining Black's aggressive strategy that should compensate for the pawn weaknesses. More recently Van Beek-Volke, Cologne 2003 revolved around the d5-square: 7...a5 8 ♟g3 ♟a6 9 ♟d3 c6!?

10 0-0 cxd5 11 cxd5 exd5 12 ♖b1 ♘c7 13  
 ♙a2 ♙a6! 14 ♚d3 ♜e5 15 ♜d1 ♜c6

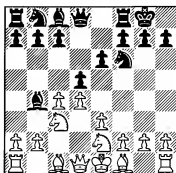


An unusual but effective use of the rooks (at such an early stage). This unorthodox approach certainly had the desired effect, as there now followed 16 f4 ♜e8 17 ♘xd5 ♘cxd5 18 ♙xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♚xd5 ♜d6 20 ♚b3 ♜xd1+ 21 ♚xd1 ♙c5 and White was missing his other bishop.

7 e4 is another logical response to Black's modest looking kingside shuffle, although 7...d5 (7...d6 8 g3 c5 9 ♙g2 ♘c6 10 0-0 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 with a hedgehog set-up in Smirnov-Eliseev, St Petersburg 2003) 8 c5 ♘f7 gives Black a presence of his own in the centre, and White runs the risk of over-extending. For example Ravia-I.Botvinnik, Ramat Aviv 2000 saw White erect a broad wall of pawns that provided Black with a broad target: 9 c5 b6 10 b4 a5 11 ♙e3 f6 12 f4



I must say I prefer Black in this kind of position because he has all the pawn breaks, with White's task being to maintain the formation as is. Nevertheless, some players like to fight for space in this manner, even if the 'fixed' pawns are vulnerable to sacrificial possibilities, as was the case in this game. The tension had reached a maximum, so Black sought to cash in on his control with 12...fxe5 13 fxe5 axb4 14 axb4 ♙xa1 15 ♚xa1 ♘c6 16 ♚a4 ♘cxe5! 17 dxe5 bxc5 18 bxc5 ♘xc5 19 ♚d1 ♘d7 20 ♙f4 ♙b4 21 h4 c5 22 ♚f2 ♜f8 with two healthy pawns and a French style initiative for the piece. More normal is 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♙e3 (White should avoid 10 ♘xd5 c5 etc.) 10...c5 11 f4 ♘c6, when 12 dxc5 ♙xc5 13 ♙xc5 ♘xc5 14 b4 ♘c6 15 ♘xd5 ♘ed4 favoured Black if anyone in Nemet-Dizdar, Liechtenstein 1988.



### 6 a3

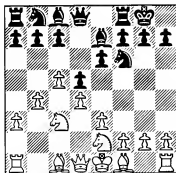
The most natural follow-up to 5 ♖e2, White effectively forcing the retreat of the bishop as 6...♙xc3+ looks wrong in that it justifies White's play and unnecessarily surrenders support of the dark squares. 6 cxd5 has been played (as has almost every feasible move in every opening) but, in my opinion, is the kind of move we learn to avoid, just like 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 cxd5, for example, which also frees the c8-bishop and reduces options in the centre. In this particular case White has not even addressed the pin before taking on d5, thus affording Black the choice of



more actively retreating to d6 after a2-a3.

### 6...♔e7

Logical and sensible, but the cheeky 6...♔d6 is also played, when White's only realistic chance of fighting for an advantage is to accept the invitation: 7 c5 ♔e7 8 b4

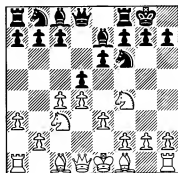


Looking at the diagram position it would seem that White has been given bonus moves. The question is whether the extra territory will bring with it an advantage, or do the advanced pawns merely provide Black with something to aim at. Here are a couple of sample lines after the expected 8...b6: 9 ♖g3 c6 10 ♔e2 (10 ♔d2 bxc5 11 bxc5 [11 dxc5?! a5] 11...e5! 12 ♔e2 exd4 13 exd4 ♖e4!?) 10...a5 11 ♖b1 ♖bd7 12 0-0 axb4 13 axb4 ♔a6 14 ♖e1 ♖c8 15 ♖c2 ♔xc2 16 ♖gx2 bxc5 17 bxc5 ♖a6 18 ♔d2 ♖fb8 19 f3 ♖xb1 20 ♖xb1 e5 was equal in Bareev-Kramnik, Monte Carlo 2003. 9 f4 rules out any thematic counters in the centre involving ...e6-e5. Benitah-Efimov, France 2001 continued 9...a5 10 ♖b1 axb4 11 axb4 bxc5 12 bxc5 ♔a6 13 ♖a4?! (13 ♖g3 ♔xf1 14 ♖xf1 is equal) 13...♖fd7 14 ♖g3 ♔h4 15 ♔e2 ♖f6 16 ♔a3 c6 17 ♖f2 e5! and White's position was (deservedly) beginning to show a couple of cracks. In fact the game soon opened up completely after 18 dxe5 ♖xe5 19 ♔b2 ♖bd7 20 ♔xa6 ♖xc5 21 ♖xd5 ♖g6 22 ♖d4 cxd5 23 ♖xc5 ♖g4+ 24 ♖e2 ♖xa6, the respective king positions being a decisive factor.

### 7 cxd5

The consistent, tidy option. 7 ♖g3 takes White's eye off the centre at the wrong time. 7...c5 being a logical reply, e.g. 8 dxc5 dxc4 9 ♖c2 ♔xc5 10 ♔xc4 ♖bd7 11 0-0 with an equal looking QGA in M.Gurevich-Gashimov, Istanbul 2003, or 8...♔xc5 9 b4 ♔e7 10 ♔b2 a5! 11 b5 dxc4 12 ♔xc4 ♖bd7 13 0-0 ♖b6 etc. Note how the knight doesn't sit well on g3 in these positions.

If White wants to continue development without first sorting out matters on d5, then 7 ♖f4 is more to the point, although it hardly taxes Black:



In fact Black should be able to find his way to a comfortable game whichever route he chooses to take. The simplest is 7...dxc4 8 ♔xc4 c5, when 9 d5 exd5 10 ♖fxd5 ♖xd5 11 ♔xd5 ♖d7 followed by ...♖b6 leaves White with nothing, while 9 0-0 is so equal that Black could choose from a host of options and be okay, e.g. 9...♖c6 10 d5 exd5 11 ♖fxd5 ♖xd5 12 ♔xd5 ♖d6 13 e4 ♔e6 14 ♔e3 ♖ad8, Banikas-Kovacevic, Halkidiki 2002, 9...a6! 10 dxc5 ♔xc5 11 b4 ♔e7 12 ♔b2 ♖xd1 13 ♖fxd1 b5 14 ♔b3 ♔b7 15 f3 ♖c6 16 ♖f2 ♖fd8 17 ♖ac1 which was agreed drawn in Zueger-Liao, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988 or 9...♖bd7 10 dxc5 ♔xc5 11 ♖e2 a6 12 ♖d1 ♖e7 13 ♔d2 b5 14 ♔a2 ♔b7 as in Pavlovic-Todorovic, Nis 1993.

Of course when getting in this early 8...c5 Black must be content to settle for the

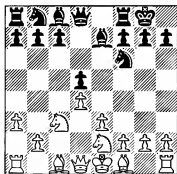
queenless middlegames that can result from d4xc5. Otherwise there is also (7...dxc4 8 ♙xc4 8...♖c6 with the plan of ...e6-e5, e.g. 9 ♖fe2 a6 10 0-0 ♙d6 11 e4 e5 12 d5 ♖c7 13 f3 ♖g6 14 ♙e3 ♗e7 15 ♗d2 h6 16 ♖h1 ♙d7 with chances for both sides in this completely different situation in Drazic-Zelcic, Star Dojran 1996.

More popular is 7...c6. Then 8 b4 ♖bd7 9 c5 e5 10 dxe5 ♖xe5 11 ♙b2, Hort-Shamkovich, Tbilisi 1970 looks fine for Black thanks to his presence in the centre, whereas 9...b6 10 ♖d3 ♗c7 11 f4 a5 12 ♙d2 ♙a6 13 ♙e2 ♖e4 14 ♖xe4 dxe4 15 ♖f2 was equal in Keene-Andersson, Reykjavik 1972.

White has other options, the 'main line' being 8 ♙d3 dxc4 9 ♙xc4 ♖bd7, e.g. 10 ♗c2 (10 ♖d3 c5) 10...e5 11 ♖fe2 exd4 12 ♖xd4 ♖e5 13 ♙e2 ♙c5 14 ♖f5 g6 15 ♖g3 ♙g4 16 0-0 ♙xc2 17 ♖cxe2 ♗e7 18 b3 ♙ad8 19 ♙b2 ♗fe8 with a balanced game in Shirov-Kramnik, Dortmund 1998. Meanwhile, 8...♖bd7 9 cxd5 ♖xd5 10 e4 ♖xf4 11 ♙xf4 e5! 12 dxe5 (12 ♙xe5? ♖xe5 13 dxe5 ♗d4) 12...♗c7 13 ♙g3 ♖xe5 14 ♙c2, Petursson-Olafsson, Gausdal 1996 is interesting, although Black must look out for an eventual charge of White's kingside, beginning with f2-f4.

### 7...♖xd5

Taste is an important factor here. I would prefer the more fluid text, but 'fixing' the structure is also perfectly feasible – 7...exd5

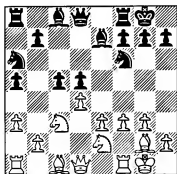


The problem for Black is that any future would-be positive action in the centre that involves advancing the c-pawn to c5 could leave d5 vulnerable. From White's point of view the comparisons with exchange variations of the QGD highlight a key difference, namely the limited scope of the dark-squared bishop, which here sits inside the pawn complex rather than on g5 or f4, from where the game can be much better influenced. Consequently I would suggest that a kingside fianchetto at least gives 5 ♖e2 more purpose and independence than QGD treatments such as 8 b4 c6 9 ♖g3 ♙e8 10 ♙d3 ♖bd7 11 0-0 ♖b6 12 ♙b1 ♙e6 13 a4 with the usual minority attack for White and decent freedom and piece play for Black in Illescas Cordoba-Slobodjan, Pamplona 1996, or 8 ♖f4 c6 9 ♙d3 ♙e8 10 0-0 ♖bd7 11 f3 ♖f8 12 ♙c2 ♖e6 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♖xe6 ♙xe6 15 fxe4 ♙g4! (Irzhanov-Ehlvest, St Petersburg 1994) followed by dropping the bishop back to g6 to take the sting out of White's presence on the b1-h7 diagonal.

Thus after 8 g3 the solid 8...c6 is typical as Black tends to bolster the defence of the d5-pawn at some point, serving also to 'shorten' the long diagonal. Recently Black has tried 8...b6 9 ♙g2 ♙b7 10 b4 ♙e8 11 ♗b3 a6 12 0-0 c6 with a very slight edge for White in Dydyshko-Babula, Czech Republic 2003. Confidence and positional ability help in the decision making process here – when weaker players voluntarily compromise the queenside in this kind of situation we await some kind of positional punishment, but when strong players do the same the queenside seems in safe hands...

Anyway, 8 g3 c6 makes sense to all of us, and after 9 ♙g2 Black's next is not difficult to find, either, in that there is more than one playable continuation for the second player. For example 9...a5 10 0-0 ♖a6 keeps White's queenside ambitions in check and prepares to bring the knight into the game via c7. If White is going to make any progress it must

now be in the centre or on the kingside, but after the change of plan with 11 f3 the bishop's view is obstructed, presenting Black with a window of opportunity for 11...c5!

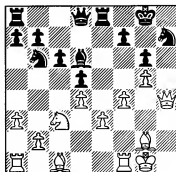


This advance is justifiable now that the d5-pawn is under less pressure. Additionally the challenge by the c-pawn is inconvenient for White when we look at the newly – albeit slightly – compromised dark squares created by f2-f3. Amusingly in the diagram position White's efforts to generate an advantage can only continue to head eastwards following Black's no-nonsense preventative action on the queenside and in the centre. This leaves expansion with 12 g4 h6 13 d2 e8, when Black's game looks easier to play.

In fact it is not imperative that Black prevents White from carrying out queenside expansion. I rather like the immediate 9...d6 10 0-0 d7 (but I have also played 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d6 in international competition, for that matter) because then 11 b4 can be met with 11...a5, when 12 b1 f5 simply helps Black. Moreover by sending the knight to c7 with the pawn still on a7 Black also has an interesting possibility in some circumstances of ...a7-a6 followed by ...b5 – in order to recapture with the a-pawn for an effective cluster – and a juicy relocation on d6, from where both e4 and c4 can be monitored, the latter particularly significant with White's pawn on b4. Again White has the alternative strategy in 11 f3 and, again, Black

should play 11...c5, with instant equality in Gyimesi-Epishin, Parnu 1996.

Incidentally, failure by Black to address the opposition's plans is risky, as was demonstrated in Garifulin-Shinkarev, Odessa 2003. After 9...d6 10 0-0 e8 11 f3 there are no prizes for suggesting the familiar 11...c5, when Black can even benefit from leaving the queen's knight at home by then having the natural c6-square available. Instead Black continued rather passively, and was met with an inexorable creeping forward of enemy pawns: 11...d8? 12 g4! d6 13 d4 d6 14 d6 g6 h6 15 g5 h7 16 f4 d7 17 h4 b6 18 h5 gxh5 19 xh5 g6 20 h4



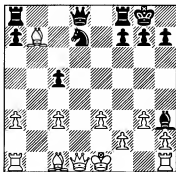
Here we have an altogether different situation which Black sought to handle with 20...f5 21 gxh5 xh5 22 g4 f5 23 xh5 gxh5 24 h3 f8, but the new structure considerably favoured White, whose advantage grew following 25 f2 g7 26 d2 c8 27 g1+ f6 28 d2 e7 29 h1 f7 30 d6! e6 31 d3 etc.

### 8 d2

I like this move, which keeps White's options open, although how the opening and middlegame pan out are more down to style, individual taste and understanding than realistic chances to gain an advantage. 8 d5 has no teeth and no appeal. 8 e4 is direct but early, and Black can exploit his opponent's tardy development with a strike against the d-pawn after 8...dxc3 9 dxc3 (9 bxc3 c5)

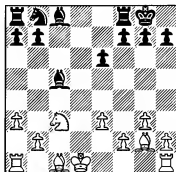
9...c5 10 d5 exd5, when either recapture leaves White with an inferior QGA.

8 g3 can transpose to the main game, while Black can also act in the centre, e.g. 8...♟xc3 9 ♟xc3 (9 bxc3? ♜d5 10 ♜g1 c5) 9...c5 with a decision to make for White. 10 d5 ♟f6 11 ♟g2 ♟xc3+ 12 bxc3 exd5 13 ♜xd5! ♜e7 worked out well for Black in Shaked-Kramnik, Tilburg 1997: 14 ♜b1? (14 0-0 ♟c6 is much the lesser evil, although the onus is on White to find a decent game) 14...♟c6 15 0-0 ♟e6 16 ♜h5 ♜ad8 17 e4 ♟a2! 18 ♜a1 (18 ♜b2 ♟c4 19 ♜e1 ♟e5) 18...♟c4 19 ♜e1 ♟e5 and White was struggling. The meticulous Belgian GM Luc Winants offers 13 ♟xd5 as an improvement, with the following analysis: 13...♟h3! 14 ♟xb7 (14 ♟xf7+ ♟xf7 15 ♜h5+ ♟g8 16 ♜xh3 ♜d3 is ugly for White) 14...♟d7



15 ♟xa8 ♜xa8 16 f3 ♟e5 17 ♟f2 ♜d8 18 ♜e2 ♟g4+ 19 ♟e1 ♟e5 20 ♟f2 ♟g4+ draws, but I think Black might prefer 18...♟g4! 19 ♜d1 ♟xf3 20 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 21 ♜c2 ♜f6, e.g. 22 ♟g1 ♟c6! or 22 ♟e1 ♟g4 etc. White's best is 15 ♜h5! ♜b8 16 ♜xh3 (not 16 ♟e4? ♟f6 17 ♜xh3 [17 ♟xh7+ ♟xh7 18 ♜xh3 ♜d3] 17...♟xe4 18 0-0 ♟xc3, but 16 ♟f3 ♜f6 17 ♟d2 is unclear) 16...♟xb7 17 0-0 ♜f6 when Black has obvious compensation for the pawn.

10 dxc5 invites a trade that can lead to an awkward defensive task for Black after the unlikely 10...♟xc5 11 ♟g2 ♜xd1+ 12 ♜xd1?



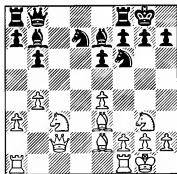
The point behind White's recapture is to place the king on c2 for the coming ending. A typical example is M.Gurevich-Wells, Andorra Zonal 1998, which went 12...♟d7! 13 ♟d2 (13 b4!? ♟e7 14 ♟b2 ♟b6 15 ♟c2 ♟c4) 13...♟e7 (13...♜d8 14 ♟c2 ♟e5 15 ♜hd1 ♟g4 16 ♟e4 ♟e7 17 h3 is a comfortable edge for White) 14 ♟c2 ♜b8 15 ♜hd1 b5! 16 e4! a5 17 ♟f4 ♜b7 (17...e5 18 ♟e3) 18 ♟d6! ♟xd6 and now Gurevich suggests 19 e5! as problematic for Black, e.g. 19...♜b6 20 exd6 ♟b7 21 ♟xb7 ♜xb7 22 b4 with a definite advantage, or (even better) 19...♟xe5 20 ♟xb7 ♟xb7 21 ♜xd7 ♟c6 22 ♜a7 etc. 12...a5 13 ♟d2 ♟e7 14 ♜c1 ♟d7 15 ♟c2 a4 16 ♜cd1 ♜a6 17 ♟a2! ♟c5 18 ♟b4 also favoured White in Dydyshko-Acs, Lubniewice 2002.

The course of M.Gurevich-Ligterink, Dutch League 1998 has been recommended for Black: 12...♟c6 13 ♟c2! e5! 14 b4 ♟b6 15 ♟b2 and now 15...♟f5+ 16 ♟b3 ♟e6+ 17 ♟d5 gives White an edge, while I like 15...♜d8 with the idea of playing the checks without allowing the block on d5, the point being that 16 ♟d5 ♟f5+ 17 e4 runs into 17...♜xd5! etc. Instead Black played 15...♟e6, when 16 ♟d5 should have met with 16...♟d4+!, e.g. 17 exd4 exd4 18 ♟xe6 dxc3 19 ♟xc3 fxc6 20 f4 with equality. However, one line from Gurevich runs 16 ♜ad1 ♜ac8 17 ♟b1 ♟b3 (17...♜f8 18 ♟d5) 18 ♜d7 ♜f8 19 ♟xb7 ♜d2 with counterplay for

Black, but here 20 ♖c4 ♙c2+ (20...♙c2 21 ♙c1 ♖d8 22 ♙d7) 21 ♖a1 ♙xc4 22 ♙xc4 gives White enough activity to hang on to the pawn and (eventually) regroup, e.g. 22...♖d8 23 ♙e7 f6 24 ♙f5 ♙c6 25 ♙f1 (followed by ♙d7) 25...g6 26 ♙e4 ♙c4 27 ♙b1 etc. Obviously these queenless middlegames and subsequent endings are nothing to genuinely worry Black, but the g2-bishop and slight lead in development are worth something, and Nimzo fans beware the ostensibly quiet ♖e2 player who seems to be happy with equality – this is the kind of situation he had prepared for.

8 ♙c2 is, like the text, a constructive waiting move – 8...♖d7 and now 9 ♙d2 ♖5f6 (9...♖xc3 10 ♙xc3) is similar to the main game after 10 g3 etc. This time 9 c4 is slightly better than previously, but 9...♖xc3 10 ♖xc3 c5 11 d5 promises White little after 11...♖b6! 12 dxc6 ♙xe6 13 ♙c2 ♙f6 with a nice position for Black in Giorgadze-V.Salov, President's Cup 1998, while 11...♙f6 12 dxc6 fxc6 13 f4 ♙d4 has been assessed as unclear, but I prefer Black's lead in development.

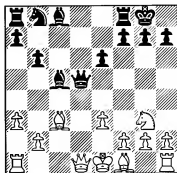
Once again I can't see anything to support 9 ♖g3, Najer-Kasimdzhanov, Zagan 1997 continuing 9...♖5f6!, dropping back the knight to avoid ♖xd5 (creating a weak d5-pawn) once the challenge to the centre comes. There followed 10 ♙e2 c5 11 dxc5 ♙xc5 12 b4 ♙e7 13 0-0 b6 14 e4 ♙b7 15 ♙e3 ♙b8!



It is no coincidence that the worst minor piece on the board is the knight on g3, which serves only to (over-) protect the e4-pawn. At least from the more traditional f3-square both e5 and d4 can be monitored, d4 being the ideal central post. The point behind the clever posting of the queen on b8 is to enable Black to follow up with 16 ♙b3 ♙c8 17 f4 a5! 18 ♙ab1 axb4 19 axb4 ♙a7! 20 ♙b5 ♙a3, when White's hitherto aggressive centre was under fire.

### 8...♖d7

Black also has 8...c5 9 dxc5 ♙xc5, when 10 ♖g3 b6 11 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 12 ♙c3 sees White's bishop on a much more profitable post than in similar lines in which the centre is cleared.

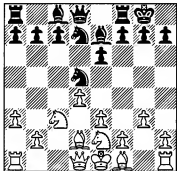


We are following Graf-Nikolaidis, Aegina 1995, which continued 12...♙xd1+ 13 ♙xd1 ♙b7 14 ♖h5! f6 15 ♙c4 ♙e8 16 h4? ♖f7 17 ♙h3 a6 18 ♙g3 ♙f8 19 ♙d3! and White's more active forces had earned him a big lead.

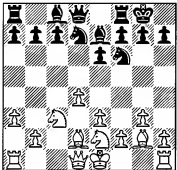
8...♖xc3 9 ♙xc3 c5 10 dxc5 ♙xd1+ 11 ♙xd1 ♙xc5 12 ♖g3 is also a shade better for White. The simple plan of recapturing on c3 with the bishop seems to have been underestimated but White is guaranteed a pull.

### 9 g3

The solid centre, fianchetto, c-file and smooth development combine well for White here. Black has more than one pattern of development of his own.

**9...♖5f6**

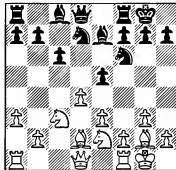
9...b6 10 ♖xd5 exd5 11 ♖g2 ♖f6 12 0-0 ♖e4 13 ♙c1 ♖b7 14 ♗c2 ♙c8 15 ♙fd1 was a slight but enduring edge for White in Ponomarev-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2003. After 15...♙d6 16 ♖b4 ♗f6 17 ♖c3 ♖xc3 18 ♗xc3 c6 19 ♙xd6 ♗xd6 20 b4 White's structural superiority put him in the driving seat for the coming ending. With the text Black refuses to commit himself, introducing both ...c7-c5 and ...e6-e5 as feasible options.

**10 ♖g2****10...e5**

Black chooses the e-pawn. 10...c6 11 ♗c2 e5 12 ♙d1 exd4 13 ♖xd4 ♖b6 14 h3 ♖fd5 15 0-0 is very similar to the main game. In Graf-Xu Jun, Bled 2002 Black was soon overrun: 15...♙f6 16 ♖ce2 a5 17 e4 ♖e7 18 ♙e3 ♖d7 19 f4 ♙xd4 20 ♖xd4 a4 21 e5 ♗a5 22 ♖f3 ♙e8 23 ♖g5 ♖f8 24 ♗f2 ♖d5

25 ♙c5 ♖e6 26 ♖xe6 ♙xe6 27 f5 with a menacing initiative.

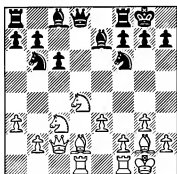
The recommended alternative is 10...c5 11 0-0 cxd4, when 12 exd4 ♖b6 13 ♙f4 ♖fd5 14 ♗d3 ♙d7 15 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 16 ♙xd5 exd5 saw an early peace agreement in Kovacevic-Palac, Nova Gorica 2002. However, I see no reason to accept an isolated d-pawn without some kind of activity or other feature as compensation. I prefer to maintain the open Catalan type character with 12 ♖xd4, when the long diagonal continues to cause Black some inconvenience. For example after 12...♖c5 13 f4! Black has to contend with the simple plan of ♗e2 followed by bringing the rooks to the centre, while b2-b4 to gain further space also looms in the background. The attempt to get proactive with 12...c5 13 ♖f5 ♖c5 14 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 15 b4 ♖d3 looks necessary, when White's choice is between 16 e4, with a slight edge, or keeping the long diagonal open with 16 ♖e4!?, which looks more promising, e.g. 16...♙d8 17 ♗e2 ♖xe4 18 ♙xe4 ♗d6 19 ♙c3.

**11 0-0 c6**

Black's position looks solid enough, but it is in fact far from ideal. The chief problem is that in the near future White will have at his disposal a collection of constructive moves such as ♗c2, bringing a rook to d1, h2-h3 and ♖h2 and so on. Black, on the other hand, has only ...♙e8 and ...♙f8 because the e5-pawn is defended by the d7-knight which, in turn,

impedes the c8-bishop. Consequently ...e5xd4 is inevitable (White will eventually be ready to take on e5 himself), after which White's presence in the centre guarantees an advantage.

12 ♖c2 exd4 13 ♗xd4 ♖b6 14 ♖ad1

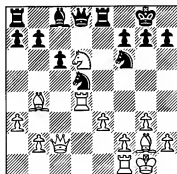


14...♗c5

14...♗f5 15 h3 leads us back to Graf-Xu Jun in the note to Black's 10th move, but 15 ♗f5 looks stronger. 14...♗g4 15 ♔ ♗h5 merely invites White to re-shape the centre soon with e3-c4 and further expansion, 16 ♗f5 ♖c8 17 ♗c1 furnishing White a clear lead. Nevertheless the text also does Black no favours on the dark squares.

15 ♗e4 ♗xd4 16 ♗b4! ♖e8 17 ♖xd4 ♖bd5

A good practical choice, offering a pawn. 18 ♗d6!?



With such an attractive position in front of him White is not interested in seeing it

disappear for a mere pawn after the inconsistent 18 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 19 ♗xd5 cxd5 20 ♖xd5 ♗e6 etc.

18...♖e5

18...♖f8 19 ♗xc8 ♗xb4 fails to 20 ♖xd8 ♗xc2 21 ♗e7+ ♖h8 22 ♖d2 and Black's knight is trapped, while 18...♖e6 walks into a skewer after 19 ♗xc8 and ♗h3. After 18...♗xb4? 19 axb4 Black is faced with both ♗xe8 and ♗xb7.

19 ♗c4 ♖e8

White also had to consider 19...♗f5 20 e4 ♖c8, when 21 exf5 ♗xb4 22 ♖xd8 ♗xc2 23 ♖d2 ♗e1 24 ♗h1! is cheeky and decisive.

20 ♖c1

Adding power to the pin by taking the sting out of ...♗xb4, thus keeping alive the supremacy on the dark squares, the most striking being d6, of course.

20...♖c7 21 ♗d6 ♖d7 22 e4 ♖b6 23 ♗c5

This time the win of a pawn with 23 ♗xb6 axb6 24 e5 ♗d5 25 ♗xd5 cxd5 26 ♖xd5 is a more realistic option because White maintains his initiative as well. The text continues to give the enemy queen the run-around.

23...♖c7

23...♖e6 24 ♗xb6 axb6 25 ♗xb6 is quite hopeless for Black, leaving White with an extra pawn and a big position.

24 ♗d6 ♖d8 25 ♖b5! cxb5 26 ♖f4 1-0

Black's queen suffers a final embarrassment, with nowhere to hide and needing to defend the rook on d8. After 26...♖d7 27 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 it is only a matter of time until White's lead on both points and position is converted. The game did deteriorate very quickly for Black, but the loss of control in the centre is illustrative of how quickly White's forces can change gear in these situations.

This line with 5 ♗e2 is indeed unambitious, but that does not mean an easy game for Black, who must be careful not to let White's 'creeping' strategy take him by surprise.

# CHAPTER SIX

## 4...0-0: White Plays 5 ♖d3 and ♞e2



1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟c3 ♞b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♞d3 d5 6 ♟e2

Those players for whom there is just one home for White's bishop in the Nimzo – d3 – are not interested in the possibility of a kingside fianchetto or a slow build-up through the opening phase. At the earliest opportunity the bishop comes to d3, being a necessary or automatic part of any strategy. Others have an affection for the immediate ♟e2. This game features examples of a combination of the two against ...d7-d5. White is willing to play a would-be aggressive IQP middlegame with his knight on e2 rather than the more traditional f3-square, but there are other choices along the way...

### Game 16

Pham Minh Hoang-Nguyen Anh Dung  
*Vietnamese Championship 2003*

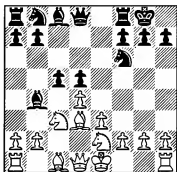
1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟c3 ♞b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♞d3 d5

Decision time. 6 ♟f3 leads to the main line and features in Chapter Seven, while this order of moves can signal White's intention not to put his knight on f3.

6 ♟e2

Another possibility, albeit less flexible, is 6 exd5, the point being to rule out potentially

inconvenient lines such as 6 ♟e2 dxc4 7 ♞xc4 e5, which is dealt with below. After 6...♟xd5 7 ♟e2 White has c3 covered and superiority in the centre, where the try with 7...c5 8 a3 cxd4 9 axb4 dxc3 10 bxc3 favours White. Consequently Black needs a centre of his own here, and only after 6...exd5 7 ♟ge2 is it appropriate to act. The most challenging response is 7...c5



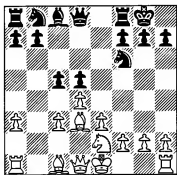
It might look odd to make this thrust when a result might be the isolation of the d5-pawn, but Black is fighting for space now that recapturing with ...exd5 has freed the bishop and therefore facilitated smooth development. Note that this position is particularly relevant in that it can also be reached after (5 ♞d3 d5) 6 ♟e2 c5 7 cxd5 exd5, for



example.

Now 8 a3 cxd4 9 axb4 dxc3 10 bxc3 ♖c6 11 b5 ♗e5 12 ♖a3 ♜e8 13 ♖c5 ♗e4 14 ♖d4 ♗xd3+ 15 ♗xd3 ♖f5 gave White a nicely centralised bishop in Saldano-Tempone, Buenos Aires 1995 but was still only level, while 10 ♗xc3 requires more careful handling from Black. For example 10...♗a6?! tempts White to part with a bishop, which in fact is a good idea: 11 ♖xa6 bxa6 12 ♗d4 ♗b6 13 ♗e2 ♖d7 14 ♖d2 ♜fc8 15 ♖c3 with a comfortable edge for White in Aleksandrov-Nielsen, Minsk 1996. The ending after 10...d4 11 exd4 ♗c6 12 0-0 ♖g4 13 ♗d2 ♗xd4 14 ♖a3 ♗c6 15 ♖a4 ♗e5 16 ♖c2 ♗xd2 17 ♖xd2, as in D.Gurevich-Farago, Hastings 1982 has been evaluated as slightly better for White in view of the two bishops, which is fair enough but nothing to write home about. A solid, less compromising response from Black is 10...♖g4 11 f3 ♖c6 12 b5 ♗bd7 13 0-0 ♗c5 14 ♖c2 ♗b6! 15 ♗d4 ♗xd4 16 exd4 ♗c4 which looks equal to me.

Returning to 8 a3, Black also has the more natural 8...♖xc3+ 9 bxc3

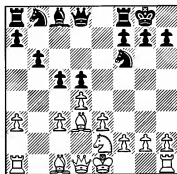


Here we see another point behind ♗e2 compared with ♗f3 in that White's new central cluster of pawns affords him the possibility of playing f2-f3 followed by kingside expansion with g2-g4 or e3-e4 etc. Black should not be tempted into 'helping' his d-pawn and simultaneously fixing the backward c-pawn

with 9...c4?! because this strengthens White's centre by dispensing with the option of ...c5xd4, thus effectively closing the centre and adding punch to an eventual e3-c4 from White. A typical continuation is 10 ♖c2 ♖g4 (or 10...♗c6 11 0-0 ♜e8 12 f3 b5 13 ♗g3 and the e-pawn will march forward in the near future) 11 f3 ♖h5 12 ♗f4 ♖g6 13 ♗xg6 hxg6 14 0-0 ♜e8 15 ♖e1 ♗c6 16 e4 b5 17 e5 ♗h7 18 f4 and White's pawn advances provided the most fun in Petursson-Van Riemsdijk, Manila 1990.

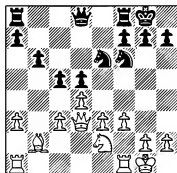
Maintaining the tension with 9...♜e8 at least monitors e4, although it is easy to see the attraction of White's coiled spring strategy featuring this structure. In Cvitan-Prandstetter, Prague 1987 Black made the mistake of provoking the enemy g-pawn: 10 f3 ♗c6 11 0-0 ♗h5?! (11...♗c7 12 ♖a2 ♖d7 13 ♗g3 ♜ad8 14 ♜c2 b5 15 ♖b2 ♗b6 16 ♗h1 is slightly better for White) 12 g4 ♗f6 13 ♗g3 h6 14 ♖a2 ♗a5 15 h4 c4 16 ♖c2 ♗d8 17 ♖b1 ♗h7 18 ♖h2 ♗f8 19 e4 and every white piece was aimed at the kingside.

Black's most logical course of action is 9...b6 with the intention of challenging White's influential bishop.

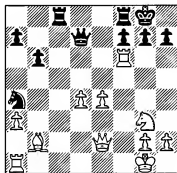


After 10 0-0 ♖a6 White's bishop can take or be taken, although the queen tends to come to d3 either way. Vera-Garcia Martinez, Las Tunas 2001 continued 11 ♖xa6 (similar is 11 f3 ♖xd3 12 ♗xd3 ♗c6 13 ♗g3 followed by ♖b2 and e3-e4, or ♖a2-c2 etc.)

11...♖xa6 12 ♖d3 (12 ♔b2?! ♖d7 13 a4 [13 ♖d3 ♖a4!]) 13...cxd4! 14 cxd4 ♖fc8 followed by ...♗c4 and ...♗ac8 sees Black assume the initiative) 12...♖c7 13 ♖3 ♖e6 14 ♔b2



Now Black should anticipate e3-e4 with the trappy 14...♗e8!, intending 15 ♖g3 (15 g4! is Plan B) 15...♖d7 16 e4? (16 ♗ad1? first makes sense) 16...cxd4 17 cxd4 dxe4 18 fxe4? (18 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♖c7 20 ♖d3 ♖d5 favoured Black in Tomic-Szabo, Vinkovci 1970) 18...♖c5!, exploiting the pin to pocket the e-pawn. Instead Black played 14...♗c8? 15 ♖g3 ♖d7, when 16 e4! cxd4 17 cxd4 dxe4 (17...♖f4 18 ♖d2 keeps the f-file closed) 18 fxe4 ♖c5 hit the queen but not the e4-pawn. There followed 19 ♖e2 ♖a4 20 ♗xf6!



This is precisely the kind of breakthrough White is looking for, e.g. 20...gxh5! ♖h8 22 ♖xf6 ♖d6 (22...♖c6 23 ♗f1) 23 e5

♖c7 24 ♗c1! (24 ♖h5? ♖c2) 24...♖xc1+ 25 ♔xc1 ♗xc1+ 26 ♖f2. The game continued 20...♖xb2 21 ♖f5! ♖e8 (21...g6 22 ♖xb2 gxh5 23 ♗xf5 ♗c2 24 ♖b4) 22 ♗f1 ♖c4 23 ♖g4 g6 24 ♖h6+ ♖h8 25 ♖xf7+ ♖g7 26 ♖d6 and White won. The character of the game when White concentrates on the snake of pawns is well suited to aggressive players, and Black must be careful. However, White, too, cannot afford to be over-confident, and can find his centre coming under fire if things don't go according to plan on the kingside, while there are even bigger dangers on the queenside.

Incidentally White also has 8 0-0 ♖c6 9 a3 cxd4 10 axb4 (10 exd4 ♔d6 11 ♔c2 ♗e8 12 h3 h6 13 ♖d3 ♔e6 is level) 10...dxc3 11 b5 ♖e5 (Black is warned against 11...cxb2?! 12 ♔xb2 ♖c7 13 ♖d4, when White has obvious compensation for the pawn), although the extra moves (8 0-0 ♖c6) compared with 8 a3 are to Black's benefit as the knight has already reached e5, e.g. 12 ♖xc3 (12 bxc3 ♔g4 13 ♖3 ♔d7 14 ♔a3 ♗e8 was equal in Stempin-Sydor, Poznan 1984) 12...♖xd3 13 ♖xd3 ♖b6 14 ♗a4 ♔e6 15 ♔d2 ♗fc8 16 ♗fal h6 17 h3 and a draw was agreed in Akesson-Stefansson, Munkebo 1998.

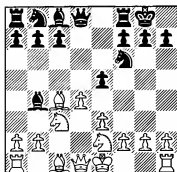
Unfortunately – depending on how you look at it – much less fun is had when Black refrains from ...c7-c5 (at least for the time being) and opts for simple, sensible piece play with 7...♗e8. Then in the event of 8 0-0 the consistent follow-up is to drop the bishop back to f8, but I prefer the obvious 8...♔d6, which keeps White on his toes. The idea behind retreating the bishop at all rather than waiting to be evicted with a2-a3 is that when Black reacts to White's announcement of aggression in the centre beginning with f2-f3 by hitting out himself with the thematic ...c7-c5 counter, his bishop will be on the right side of the c5-pawn. For example 9 ♖3 c5! 10 ♖e1 ♖c6 11 ♖h4 ♖e7? 12 ♖b5 ♖g6 13 ♖f2 ♔f8 14 dxc5 ♔xc5 15 b3 ♔d7 16 ♖bd4 ♗c8 17 ♔d2 ♖e5 was quite pleasant

for Black in Gelfand-Kotronias, Chalkidiki 1993. Of course White does not have to insist on f2-f3, but Black can happily play a QGD with White's own dark-squared bishop locked in, while the space and freedom for his pieces should also outweigh the isolated d5-pawn if he decides to throw in ...c7-c5.

Now we turn to the immediate 6 ♖e2, which awaits events in the centre but permits Black an extra possibility.

### 6...c5

With 6...dxc4 7 ♖xc4 e5! Black seeks to exploit White's reduced grip on e5 compared with lines where the knight comes to f3.

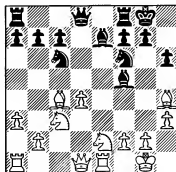


Regardless of White's response Black is guaranteed to adopt a playable pattern of development – an obvious attraction and, perhaps, drawback of this system for White (unless he is willing to release the tension with 6 cxd5). The first feature we notice is that this is not even a sacrifice, as 8 dxe5! ♖xd1+ 9 ♖xd1 ♗g4 wins back the pawn with an advantage.

Since 8 ♖b3! exd4 9 ♖xb4! ♖c6 10 ♖c5 dxc3 11 ♗xc3 runs into 11...♗d7!, which looks a shade better for Black, e.g. 12 ♖h5 ♗de5 13 ♖e2 ♗d3+ 14 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 15 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 16 ♖xe2 ♖e6, White should avoid 8 ♖b3, as here 9 ♗xd4 c5 10 ♗f3 (10 ♗c2 ♗c6 11 ♖e2 ♖f5 helps only Black) 10...♗c6 11 ♖c2 ♖g4 (Suba-Sax, Budapest 1993) and 9 exd4 ♖e7 10 0-0 ♗c6 (followed by ...♗a5) are fine for Black.

Nor does 8 a3 offer White anything, e.g. 8...♖d6 9 dxe5 (9 ♗b5 ♗c6) 9...♖xc5 10 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 11 e4 b6 12 ♖3 c5 13 ♖f4 with an early but entirely justifiable draw in Matveeva-Maric, Belgrade 1992, or 8...exd4 9 axb4 dxc3 10 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 11 bxc3 ♗bd7 12 ♗d4 c5 13 bxc5 ♗xc5 when I prefer Black.

White's only decent chance appears to be 8 0-0, e.g. 8...exd4 (or 8...♗c6 9 d5 ♗e7 10 e4 ♗g6 with play along the lines of the Chigorin or QGA with 3 e4) 9 exd4 (9 ♗xd4!?) 9...♗c6 10 h3! ♖f5 11 a3 ♖d6 12 ♖g5 h6 13 ♖h4 ♖e7 14 ♖e1 with another (3 e3 e5) QGA flavour.



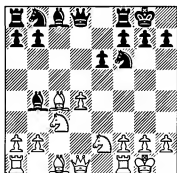
In the diagram position Psakhis gives 14...♖d7! 15 ♗g3 ♖e6 (15...♖g6 16 d5) 16 ♖xe6 (16 d5 ♗xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♖xh4) 16...fxe6 as unclear, while Alterman-Wells, Groningen 1997 went 14...♗e4 15 ♖xe7 ♗xc7 16 ♗f4 (16 ♗xc4! ♖xe4 17 ♗f4 is an edge for White according to Psakhis) 16...♗f6 17 ♗h5 ♗xh5 18 ♖xh5 ♖g6 19 ♖g4 ♖h8 (19...c6? 20 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 21 ♖xg6) 20 ♖ad1 and White had retained a modest lead even after a reduction in forces.

It is true that White is taking his eye off the e5-square with ♗e2, but many players don't feel comfortable (as Black) with the kind of positions that can arise after 6...dxc4 7 ♖xc4 e5, which brings us back to the more natural development with 6...c5:

### 7 cxd5

White decides to keep his bishop on the

b1-h7 diagonal, although it is not unusual to shift from one to another. The major alternative and oft-played line is 7 0-0 cxd4 8 exd4 dxc4 9 ♠xc4



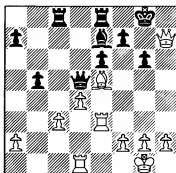
9...b6 10 d5 (10 ♠f4?) 10...e5?! (10...exd5 11 ♖xd5 ♠a6! is equal) 11 ♠g5 ♖bd7 12 a3 ♠d6 13 ♖g3 h6 14 ♠h4 was very nice for White in Banikas-Sadvakasov, Menorca 1996, which continued 14...♖c7 15 ♖e2 g6 16 ♠ac1 a6 17 ♠a2 ♖b8 18 ♖cc4 ♖xc4 19 ♖xe4 ♠b7 20 ♖g4 ♖c5 21 ♖ff6+ ♖g7 22 b4 ♠c8 23 ♖e2 ♖d7 24 ♖c4 ♠b7 25 ♠c6, and Black was struggling.

9...a6 10 a3 are a couple of moves that might be played sooner or later, but White should remember that after 10...♠d6 in these ♖e2 positions the h2-pawn is protected only once. White failed to notice the significance in Romsdal-Egeland, Alta 2003, seeing his 11 d5? answered with 11...♠xh2+ 12 ♖xh2 ♖c7+ 13 ♖g1 ♖xc4 etc.

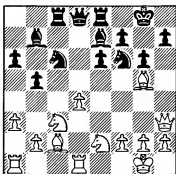
Black is more likely to move his knight. After 9...♖bd7 I prefer 10 ♠g5 to 10 a3 ♠e7 11 ♖f4, when Korchnoi-Kosashvili, Dutch League 1995 went 11...♖b6 12 ♠a2 ♖d6 13 ♠e1 ♠d8 14 ♖f3 ♖xd4 15 ♠e3 ♖d7 16 ♖xe6 fxe6 17 ♠xb6 axb6 18 ♠xe6+ ♖xe6 19 ♠xe6 ♠xe6 20 ♖e2 ♠d6 21 ♖b5 ♠ad8 22 ♖xd6 ♠xd6, the three pieces matching the queen. More recently 12...♠d7 13 ♖f3?! ♠c6 14 ♖h3 was a rather blunt attacking plan in Gervasio-Inkirov, Guingamp 2003. Black's stock rose with each elimination of a

white piece: 14...♖bd5 15 ♖cxd5 ♖xd5 16 ♠b1 g6 17 ♖d3 ♠g5 18 ♠c3 ♠b5 19 ♠d1 ♠c8 20 a4 ♠xd3 21 ♠xd3 ♠xe3 22 fxe3 ♖g5 23 e4 ♖c3 24 ♠e1 ♖c2 25 ♠xc2 ♠xc2 etc.

Instead Florea-Gavrilo, Olomouc 2002 saw White adopt a more controlled build-up after (10 ♠g5) 10...♠e7 11 ♠e1 ♖b6 12 ♠b3 ♠d7 13 ♖d3 ♠c6 14 ♠c2 ♖bd5 15 ♖h3 g6 16 ♠ad1 ♠e8 17 ♖f4, when the pressure had been combined with a presence in the centre. There followed 17...♖xf4 18 ♠xf4 ♖d5 19 ♠e5 ♠c8 20 ♠b3 ♖xc3 21 bxc3 b5 22 ♠c3 (can you see what's coming?) 22...♠d5 (22...♠f8) 23 ♠xd5 ♖xd5?? 24 ♖xh7+ 1-0



The popular choice is 9...♖c6, when 10 ♠g5 is again the most direct, e.g. 10...♠c7 11 a3 a6 12 ♖d3 b5 13 ♠b3 ♠b7 (13...♖e5 14 ♖g3 ♖c4 is fine for Black) 14 ♠c2 g6 15 ♠f1 ♠e8 16 ♖h3 ♠c8



We are following Jelling-Emms, Eupen 1994, where the chances were even. White's attempt to simplify to a draw with 17 ♖xf6?! ♗xf6 18 d5 exd5 19 ♜xd5 ♜b6 20 ♞d6 ♕e5 21 ♞d7 ♗xc3 22 ♜xc3 ♗e5 23 ♞dd1 ♜c4 left him clearly worse.

7 a3 tends to transpose after 7...cxd4 8 exd4 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♗e7, for example, while after 8 axb4 dxc3 9 ♜xc3 ♜c6 10 b5 the fun soon ends in peace, e.g. 10...♖b4 11 ♗e2 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 ♗c7 13 ♗e2 ♜c2+ 14 ♜xc2 ♜xc4 15 ♞a4 ♜c5 16 e4 ♗d7 17 ♗e2 a6 18 ♞c4 ♗e7 19 bxa6 ♞xa6 20 0-0 b5 21 ♞d4 e5 22 ♞dd1 with equality in Sadler-Blauert, Copenhagen 1992.

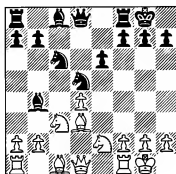
### 7...cxd4

7...♜xd5 should transpose.

### 8 exd4 ♜xd5

8...♜xd5 9 0-0 ♜h5 looks more active than it is, and 10 ♗e4 ♜xe4 11 ♗xe4 might offer White something, e.g. 11...♜c6 12 ♜f4 ♗xd1 13 ♞xd1, when Black is defending, or 12 ♜d3.

### 9 0-0 ♜c6



A typical IQP position, with Black both monitoring the d4-pawn and occupying the square in front of it. Meanwhile White's bishop eyes h7. A key difference to more conventional IQP situations in various openings and defences is the knight being on e2 rather than f3. Protection is still available for d4 (and doubled in the case of c3) but White has less control over the e5-square, while

options that present additional possibilities are ♜g3 and ♜f4 and the potential to transfer the queen along the third rank.

### 10 a3

Not surprisingly White has a number of choices, with 10 ♗c2 being the most important.

10 ♗c4 exerts pressure on d5 and makes way for ♜d3, e.g. 10...♜xc3 11 bxc3 ♗d6 12 ♜d3 with a slight pull, while 10...♗d6 11 ♜d3 ♜f6 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗h4 ♗e7 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♜c2 ♞b8 16 ♞fd1 ♗a6 17 ♞ac1 ♜d5 18 ♗xe7 ♜xe7 19 ♜g3 ♜b4 20 b3 illustrated another point behind placing the bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal in Matveeva-H.Hunt, Erevan 1996, White hoping to steer the game to a good knight versus bad bishop ending (although the game looks balanced).

10 ♜xd5 offers both sides few winning prospects after either recapture.

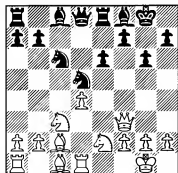
The advantage of gaining time with 10 ♜c2 g6 11 ♗h6 ♞e8 12 ♞ad1 soon disappeared in Kozlov-Belikov, Alushta 2002 when Black played 12...♗d6, threatening both the decisive ...♜h4 and the positionally oriented (light squares) ...♖b4, thus forcing the useless 13 ♜c1 with a fine position for Black.

10 ♗c2 prepares to line the queen and bishop the other way around. Then 10...♗d6 11 ♗e4 ♗e7 12 a3 leads back to the main game and 10...♜xc3 11 bxc3 ♗d6 12 ♜g3 (12 ♜d3 g6 13 ♜g3 followed by ♗e4 is more to the point) 12...e5 13 d5 ♜c7 14 ♞e1 f5 15 c4 b6 16 ♗b2 ♜g6 was well balanced in G.Buckley-Sher, Hastings 1995.

After 10...♗e7 11 ♜d3 ♜f6 12 a3 g6 13 ♗h6 ♞e8 14 ♗a4 a6 15 ♜f3 ♗d7 the light-squared bishops were about to be traded off in Jelen-Sher, Ptuj 1991. We would expect such an exchange to favour Black in these positions, and this should have been the case had Black followed up 16 ♞ad1 ♜a5 17 ♗xd7 with 17...♜xd7!, e.g. 18 ♗g5 ♜c6 or 18 d5 ♜c4 19 dxc6 ♜xc6 etc. Instead White was given the opportunity to justify his strat-

ogy when 17...♖xd7? invited 18 d5 which, it must be said, White had been building up to. The subsequent 18...e5 (18...exd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖c4 20 ♜fd1 ♖cb6 21 ♜5d2 ♜c8 22 ♖e4 is awkward for Black) 19 d6 ♖f8 20 ♖xf8 ♜xf8 21 b4 ♖c6 22 ♖d5 left White with a clear advantage.

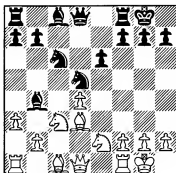
10...♞e8 is another recommended move, after which 11 ♜d3 g6 12 ♜d1 ♖f8 13 ♜f3 is typical:



Here we see another characteristic of this particular ♖e2 system, White's queen and king's knight occupying f3 and e2 respectively when they are more often placed the other way around. This adds to White's influence on the d5-square, which is normally safely in Black's hands. G.Timoschenko-Arnason, Helsinki 1986 continued 13...♖g7 14 ♖e4 ♖xc3 15 bxc3 ♖e5 (I prefer White after 15...e5 16 ♖e3 exd4 17 cxd4) 16 ♜g3 ♖c4 17 ♖d3 ♜d5 (17...♖d6 18 ♖f4 ♖f5 19 ♜f3 looks favourable for White) 18 ♖f4 ♜c6 and now 19 ♖h5! b5 (19...♖h8 20 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 21 ♖g5) 20 ♖xg7 ♜xg7 21 ♜h4 aimed at Black's dark squares. This colour complex also came under fire in Lutz-Sher, Budapest 1989 after 13...♖xc3 14 bxc3 ♖g7 15 ♖g3 f5 16 ♖e2 ♜c7 17 ♖b3 ♖a5 18 ♖f4 ♜f7 19 ♖e5 ♖d7 20 ♖f4 ♖c6 21 ♜e2 ♖h6 22 c4 a6 23 ♜d2 ♖xb3 24 axb3 ♜ad8 25 ♜c3 with the better game for White.

More recently White had less success after

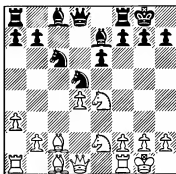
13...b6 14 ♖e4 ♖cc7 15 ♖g5 ♖b7 16 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 17 ♖c3 ♜d7 18 ♖xe7 ♖xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♖xe7, Nakamura-Christiansen, Seattle 2003, when the USA's latest sensation decided a draw was the most he could expect, 20 d5 exd5 21 ♖xd5 ♜e6 22 h3 ♜ad8 23 ♖c3 leading to equality.



10...♖d6 11 ♖e4 ♖e7

11...♖c7 12 ♖c2 ♜h4 13 h3 h6 14 ♜d3 ♜d8 15 ♖d2 ♖f6 16 ♖f3 ♜h5 17 ♖f4 ♖xf4 18 ♖xf4 ♜a5 was equal in Korchnoi-Yusupov, Ubeda 1997. Here 14...f5! has been suggested, although Black must be prepared to defend e5 and the dark squares in general after 15 ♖d2 followed by ♖f3 and ♖b3 etc.

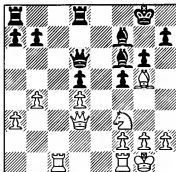
12 ♖c2



With b4 covered White is ready to look menacing with ♜d3, while the knight is fairly actively placed on e4.

## 12...b6

12...♖c7 13 ♖d3 ♜d8 14 ♘c3 g6 15 ♙h6 f5! was the course of Shariyazdanov-Shestoperov, Briansk 1995, when 16 ♘d5 exd5 17 ♘d2 ♙f6 18 ♘f3 ♙e6 19 b4 ♙f7 20 ♙a4 ♖b6 21 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 22 ♜ac1 ♖d6 23 ♙g5 resulted in the following position:



Black has seen better days on the dark squares. It is interesting how the mere presence of White's knight on e4 can induce the risky advance of Black's f-pawn, a thrust that Black must be sure about in these lines. A better way to challenge the knight is with 15...♘f6, but perhaps 15...e5 is the thematic means with which to exploit the absence of a knight on f3. Then 16 ♘d5 (16 dxc5? ♘db4) 16...♜xd5 17 ♘c3 is the kind of continuation that might dissuade Black from venturing with ...e6-e5 in view of 17...♜xd4 18 ♘b5, although the compensation looks nice and healthy after 18...♖b6 19 ♘xd4 ♘xd4, while 17...♜d8 18 d5 ♙f5 19 ♖d2 ♙xc2 20 ♖xc2 ♘d4 is fine for the second player.

That Black is often unwilling to push his e-pawn despite it offering good chances of achieving equality must be the reason why 12...e5 is not seen more often. In this variation White tends to get away with being able to generate attacking opportunities on the kingside while simultaneously availing himself of other possibilities afforded by the knight being on e2 because Black's 'punish-

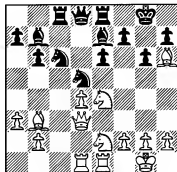
ment' with ...e6-e5 is rather unambitious. For example 13 dxc5 ♘xe5 14 ♘f4 ♘xf4 15 ♙xf4 ♘g6 is heading for wholesale exchanges (and a draw), while the more aggressive looking 14 ♖d4 will soon reach the same conclusion. Both players, for whatever reason, should be on the lookout for ...e6-e5 as the opening progresses.

Most Nimzo players are content to face White's attacking forces as long as there is a target on d4 on which to concentrate when the smoke has cleared – hence Black's choice of calm development with the planned queenside fianchetto.

## 13 ♖d3 g6

Automatic, but the ultra-calm 13...a5! has been played by Helgi Olafsson with success, e.g. 14 ♘d6 g6 15 ♘xc8 ♜xc8 16 ♙h6 ♜c8 17 ♙a4 ♙f8 etc. However, I prefer 14 ♘c3 g6 15 ♘d5, when an entertaining sample line is 15...♖xd5 (15...exd5 16 ♖f3 ♙a6 17 ♜d1 is safer) 16 ♙b3 ♙a6! (16...♖d7 17 ♙c4 ♙b7 18 ♙c3 is balanced, although Black would now prefer to return his pawn to a7) 17 ♙xd5 ♙xd3 18 ♙xc6 ♙xc2 19 ♜e1 ♜ac8 20 ♘d7! ♜cd8 21 ♙h6.

## 14 ♙h6 ♜e8 15 ♜ad1 ♙b7 16 ♜fe1 ♜c8 17 ♙b3



Notice how White's aggressive stance is also founded on a central theme. Black has made a positional concession with ...g7-g6 which, for now, is enough for White, the bishop an unwelcome visitor on h6. How-

ever, the rest of White's forces focus on d4, e4, e5 and now d5 (remember that this latest square can be monitored from c3 and the less traditional f4). The text is also aimed at the e6-pawn in case Black removes the blockader from d5 (to challenge the e4-knight, for example), when White will soon (after ♖f4) have a bishop, knight and rook will all be locked on e6.

### 17...♟d7

Defending e6 in preparation for positive action on the kingside. 17...♞c7 followed by ...♟d7 has been suggested, which looks sensible as long as ♔a4 (and ♞c1) can be dealt with. Note here that Black's plan would be less effective with White's knight on f3 as ♖c5 would be another option.

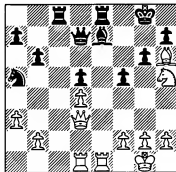
### 18 ♖g3 f5

Part of the plan. Such play requires some nerve and a helping of technique and positional appreciation. The e6-pawn is now backward, e5 is more susceptible to occupation and even the a2-g8 diagonal looks nicer from White's side of the board.

### 19 ♖c3 ♖a5 20 ♖xd5 ♔xd5 21 ♔xd5 exd5

21...♟xd5 22 ♖h5? ♖c4 23 ♖f4 ♟d7 24 ♟e2 ♔d6 is unclear.

### 22 ♖h5!?



It would be interesting to know whether Black had seen this potential spanner in the works when he embarked on his 'light-square' plan. From Black's point of view the fact that this knight did not stand on f3 meant that the strategy would not run into ♖c5, but White had been waiting to launch an offensive against the compromised dark squares.

### 22...♖c4!

22...gxf5? 23 ♟g3+ ♔g5 24 ♟xg5+ ♖h8 25 ♞e5 doesn't immediately lose for Black but it is awful nonetheless.

### 23 ♖g7?

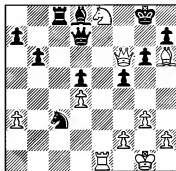
Difficult to resist, no doubt, rather than the sober but dull 23 ♞c2.

### 23...♖xb2 24 ♟e2 ♖xd1 25 ♖xe8 ♔h4?

25...♞xe8 is necessary, when 26 ♟e5 ♔xa3 27 ♟xe8+ ♟xe8 28 ♞xe8+ ♖f7 can't be any worse for Black thanks to his passed pawns.

### 26 g3 ♖c3 27 ♟e5 ♖e4

The point behind White's play is that after 27...♔d8 there comes 28 ♟f6!



Very nice.

### 28 ♞xe4! dxe4 29 ♖d6 1-0

Unfortunately for Black 29...♔d8 30 gxf4, for example, leaves him tied up as the knight is safe due to the mate on g7.



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## 4...0-0:

### White Plays 5 ♖d3 and ♗f3



1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♗f3

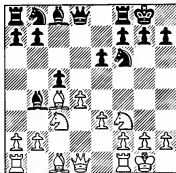
If the knight is coming to f3 anyway there are – unlike ♗e2 systems – numerous move orders with which to reach the ‘standard’ position discussed in Kramnik-Tiviakov (Game 18). For example the game can begin 1 ♗f3 or 1 c4. First we have a look at examples where Black throws in an early ...dxc4:

#### Game 17

### Akesson-Barkhagen

Sweden 2003

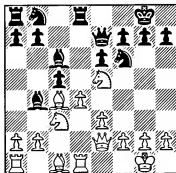
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 ♗f3 d5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♗xc4



lowing main game) Black prefers to stamp a bit of his own authority in the centre, usually following up with ...c5xd4 to play against the IQP, reserving the option of ...♗xc3.

#### 8...cxd4

With 8...♗d7 Black maintains tension and plans to post the bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal without compromising the queenside with ...b7-b6. The bishop is within striking distance in the event of ♗e5 from White, but this capture takes time, and finding constructive moves other than disturbing the b8-knight allows a developing recapture with this piece on either c6 or d7 (Black might also contemplate ...♗c6xf3 and ...♗c6 pressing against d4). After 9 ♖e2 ♖e7 10 ♗d1 ♗c6 11 ♗e5 ♗d8 we reach the following:

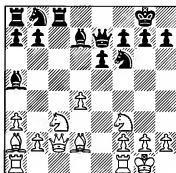


Rather than go in for 7...♗c6 8 a3 (see fol-

We are following Rogers-Lobron, Bundesliga 1996. Black's plan – as they often do – looks simultaneously artificial and logical. The arrangement has taken time but d4 is in Black's sights, ♖xc6 seems only to justify leaving the knight on b8 and the cheeky bishop even monitors the traditionally relevant d5-square. In fact Black was so happy with the courage of this piece that he offered it for the other knight after 12 a3 ♖a5 13 h3 ♖d5!?, when there followed 14 ♖xd5 exd5 15 ♖a2 ♖c7 16 b3?! ♖xe5 17 dxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♖b2 ♖c7 19 ♖b5 and White's compensation didn't appear to be worthy of the half-point awarded him by his opponent. A simple improvement here is 13 dxc5 ♖xd1+ 14 ♖xd1 ♖xc5 15 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 16 b4 ♖b6 17 ♖b2 ♖bd7 with a slight edge to White thanks to the bishop pair.

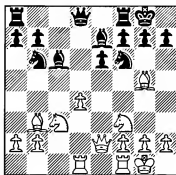
Incidentally Taimanov, who knows a thing or two about chess, has toyed with dropping the bishop back to e8 in response to ♖c5. Lyrberg-Taimanov, Osterskan 1994 saw 10...♖c8 11 ♖c5 ♖c8!? 12 ♖d2 ♖c6, luring the knight forward in order to challenge it and hit the centre. Then 13 a3 ♖xc3 14 ♖xc3 ♖e4 15 ♖e1 cxd4 16 exd4 ♖xc5 17 dxc5 ♖c5 18 b3 b5! put the bishop to good use to secure the better game as 19 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 20 ♖xb5 ♖ab8 21 ♖f1 ♖xb3 22 ♖b4 ♖xb4 23 axb4 ♖xa1 24 ♖xa1 ♖xb4 25 ♖xa7 ♖b2 left White with a difficult ending to look forward to.

8...♖c7 brings with it similar ideas of avoiding ...c5xd4. White's best appears to be 9 a3, e.g. 9...♖a5 10 ♖c2 ♖d7 11 ♖a2 (11 dxc5 ♖xc5 12 ♖e4 ♖xe4 13 b4 ♖h5 14 ♖xe4 ♖c6 15 ♖f4 ♖b6 was equal in Gligoric-Smyslov, Bled 1959) 11...♖c8 (Psakhis gives 11...♖c6!?) 12 ♖e5 cxd4 13 exd4 ♖c8 14 ♖g5 as more interesting for White, who plans ♖ad1, ♖b1 etc.) 12 ♖d2 cxd4 (12...♖c7 13 d5 exd5 14 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♖c6 16 ♖c3 was no more than a minute edge for White in Gligoric-Reshevsky, Lugano Olympiad 1968) 13 exd4

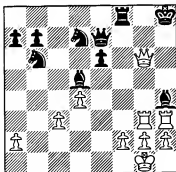


Now 13...♖c6 14 d5!? ♖xc3 15 dxc6 ♖xd2 16 cxb7 ♖xb7 17 ♖xd2 favoured White in Portisch-Gheorghiu, Skopje 1968, while Schmaus-Boeven, Correspondence 1973 soon got busy after 13...h6 14 ♖fc1 ♖d8 15 ♖d3 ♖c6 16 ♖ad1 ♖e8 17 ♖b1 a6 18 g4! with a menacing attack in the making.

Unlike these two 8th move options, 8...♖bd7 can easily transpose to ...cxd4 lines (as can 8...b6). Therefore 9 ♖e2 makes sense, e.g. 9...a6 10 a4 b6 11 ♖a2!? ♖a5 (11...♖b7!?) 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 b3 ♖b7 14 ♖b2 ♖c7 15 ♖fd1 ♖c6 16 h3 ♖b7 17 ♖c1 ♖e4 18 ♖c2 ♖b6 19 ♖e5 Sadler-N.Pedersen, Solingen 2002, with a pleasant position for White. More recently in Klimov-Solozhenkin, St Petersburg 2003 Black again tried to justify his specific move order: 9...cxd4 10 exd4 ♖b6 11 ♖b3 ♖d7 12 ♖g5 ♖c6 13 ♖ad1 ♖c7



There is no denying Black's grip on d5 here. However, concentrating too heavily on this square in complex IQP positions tends to leave White with more freedom elsewhere, a lesson Sadler was able to deliver now after 14  $\text{Qe5}$   $\text{Rd5}$  15  $\text{Rc2}$ , when Black was sitting pretty with nowhere to go, while White's forces had a well defined destination in mind. There followed 15... $\text{Rc8}$  16  $\text{Nfe1}$   $\text{Qfd7}$  17  $\text{Wh5!}$   $\text{g6}$  18  $\text{Qxg6}$   $\text{fxg6}$  (18... $\text{Rxg5}$  19  $\text{Qe7+}$ ) 19  $\text{Rxg6}$   $\text{hxg6}$  20  $\text{Wxg6+}$   $\text{Rh8}$  21  $\text{Wh6+}$   $\text{Qg8}$  22  $\text{Wg6+}$   $\text{Rh8}$  23  $\text{Rd3!}$ ?  $\text{Rxc3}$  24  $\text{Bxc3}$   $\text{Rxg5}$  25  $\text{Rh3+}$   $\text{Rh4}$  26  $\text{Wh6+}$   $\text{Qg8}$  27  $\text{Wg6+}$   $\text{Rh8}$  28  $\text{Rcc3!}$ ?  $\text{We7}$  29  $\text{Rcg3}$

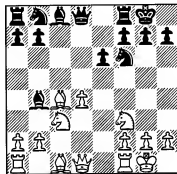


29... $\text{Qf6}$  30  $\text{Rxh4+}$   $\text{Qh7}$  31  $\text{Rhg4}$  (threatening  $\text{Wg8+}$ ) 31... $\text{e5}$  32  $\text{dxe5}$  and now Black cracked, 32... $\text{Wxe5?}$ ? 33  $\text{Wxh7+!}$  leading to forced mate. It is interesting that Sadler, a QGA expert, reacted to Black's slow manoeuvring around d5 by throwing everything – kitchen sink included – at the kingside.

### 9 exd4

Black has resolved an issue or two in the centre and his bishop is still in play, affording him the options of ... $\text{Re7}$  and ... $\text{Rxc3}$ , depending on the circumstances. White's development in the diagram position is fairly obvious, with  $\text{Rg5}$  sure to feature, the queen taking up residence on e2 or d3, rooks coming to the centre, perhaps dropping the bishop back to the potentially promising b1-h7 diagonal etc. Black, on the other hand, does not enjoy such freedom for his forces,

although he is not without choice.

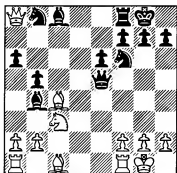


### 9...b6

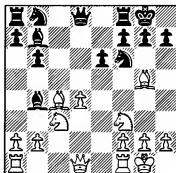
The most popular option. 9... $\text{Qbd7}$  tends to be transpositional, as does 9... $\text{Qc6}$  – for example 10 a3  $\text{Re7}$  is dealt with in Kramnik-Tiviakov (Game 18). The chief independent alternative is 9...a6, when White must decide whether or not to allow ...b7-b5. 10 a4  $\text{Qc6}$  11  $\text{Rg5}$   $\text{Re7}$  12  $\text{Re1}$   $\text{h6}$  13  $\text{Rh4}$   $\text{Rd7}$  14  $\text{We2}$   $\text{Qh5}$  15  $\text{Rxc7}$   $\text{Qxc7}$  16  $\text{Qe5}$   $\text{Qf6}$  should be about even but 12... $\text{Qb4}$  13  $\text{We2}$   $\text{Rd7!}$ ? 14 d5! was a typical example of Black's efforts to control d5 meeting with the action taking place there anyway in Vaissier-Marciano, Meribel 1998: 14... $\text{Qbxd5}$  15  $\text{Qxd5}$   $\text{Qxd5}$  16  $\text{Rxd5}$   $\text{Rg5}$  17  $\text{Rxb7}$   $\text{Rb8}$  (17... $\text{Ra7}$  18  $\text{Rxa6}$ ) 18  $\text{Qxg5}$   $\text{Wxg5}$  (18... $\text{Rxb7?}$  19  $\text{We4}$ ) 19  $\text{Wxa6}$   $\text{We7}$  20 a5  $\text{Wb4}$  21  $\text{Rf3}$   $\text{Rb5}$  22  $\text{Wa7}$   $\text{Rxb2}$  23 a6  $\text{Rc4?}$  24  $\text{Rxb8!}$   $\text{Rxb8}$  25 a7  $\text{Qd5}$  26  $\text{Rxd5}$   $\text{exd5}$  27 a8 $\text{W1-0}$ .

Instead 10  $\text{Rg5}$   $\text{b5}$  11  $\text{Rb3}$   $\text{Rb7}$  12  $\text{We2}$   $\text{Rxc3}$  13  $\text{Bxc3}$   $\text{Qbd7}$  14  $\text{Qe5}$  is level, while I prefer the more direct 11  $\text{Rd3}$   $\text{Rb7}$  12  $\text{Rc1}$   $\text{Qbd7}$  13  $\text{Rb1}$ , e.g. 13... $\text{Rc8}$  14  $\text{Re1}$   $\text{Re7}$  15 a3 and now 15... $\text{Qd5}$  16  $\text{Wd3}$   $\text{g6}$  17  $\text{Rh6}$   $\text{Rc8}$  has been assessed as unclear but is typical of these positions, and 15... $\text{Re8}$  16  $\text{Wd3}$   $\text{Qf8}$  17  $\text{Rcd1}$   $\text{Wb6}$  (17... $\text{Qg6!}$ ?) 18 h4  $\text{Rcd8}$  was the course of I.Sokolov-Christiansen, Reykjavik 1998, Black deciding against compromising his defensive wall (for the moment, at least).

Finally, with 10 ♖e5 White actually wants the b7-pawn to advance: 10...b5 11 ♖f3? ♖xd4! (11...♗b6!? – Psakhis – and 11...♞a7 are alternatives) 12 ♗xa8 (12 ♖xf7? ♗a7!) 12...♗xe5



10...♠b7



11 ♞e1

White improves another piece. It is not unusual for the ostensibly aggressive 11 ♖e5 to be, in fact, tantamount to a draw offer, as 11...♠xc3 12 bxc3 ♗c7 13 ♠xf6 gxf6 14 ♖g4+ ♖h8 15 ♗h4 fxe5 16 ♗f6+ with a perpetual is not an uncommon end to the game, e.g. Czebe-Vadasz, Budapest 1998 and Timman-Karpov, Malta Olympiad 1980 to pluck just two from history.

White can try 13 ♞e1? ♖bd7 14 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 15 ♠d3

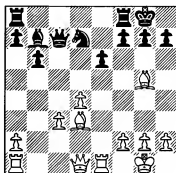
This is fun – and part of the plan for both sides. Psakhis offers the following variations: 13 ♠b3 ♖g4 14 g3 ♗h5 15 h4 (15 ♗g2 ♠b7 16 f3 ♠c5+ 17 ♖h1 ♖xh2! 18 ♗xh2 ♠xf3+ 19 ♞xf3 ♗xf3+ 20 ♗g2 and the fate of the game is in Black's hands) 15...♠d7 and 13 ♠d3 ♖g4 14 g3 ♗h5 15 h4 (15 ♗g2 ♠xc3 16 bxc3 ♠b7) 15...♖d7 with sufficient play for Black in both cases.

The best move in the diagram position seems to be 13 ♠e2, e.g. 13...♠xc3 14 bxc3 ♗xe2 15 ♗xb8 ♗c4 16 ♠a3 ♞e8 17 ♠b4 ♖d5 as in Lautier-Salov, Wijk aan Zee 1997, when 18 ♞fe1 has been suggested, with chances for both sides. Alternatively, 15...♖d5 16 ♗g3 ♗c4 17 ♠d2 is slightly favourable for White according to Nikitin, although 17...f6 18 ♞fe1 e5 19 ♗f3 ♠g4 20 ♗e4 ♞c8, Hübner-Dreev, Wijk aan Zee 1996 was equal in Salov's opinion.

The simple 9...b6 is designed to post the bishop on b7 without the trouble of fighting for ...b7-b5 (which also uses an extra tempo should White 'ignore' 9...a6).

10 ♠g5

White can't go wrong with this active deployment of the bishop, seeking to exploit the distant would-be 'defender' on b4.

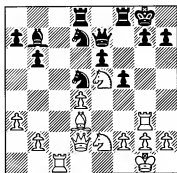


...with a view to sending the rook via e3 to the kingside for an attack, but this is a bit of a bluff that Black might just call with 15...♗xc3 16 ♞c1 ♗a5, e.g. 17 ♗g4 ♞fc8 18 ♠h6 g6 19 ♞xc8+ ♞xc8 20 ♞xe6 and the temperature is rising...

Otherwise there is 13 ♞c1 ♖bd7 14 ♖xd7

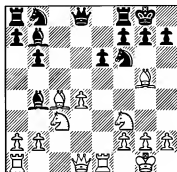
Qxd7, when both 15 Qd3? Nf8 16 Wg4 and 15 Qb3 Wc6 16 Wg4 look preferable from White's side of the board.

As for 11 Nc1, this will most likely lead to the main game after a subsequent Nc1 as these are quite natural posts for the rooks, but the arrival of the rook on c1 first can also prompt Black to retreat his bishop now that Nxc3 is a possible recapture. After 11...Qe7 12 Nc1 Black tried something different in Van Wely-Papaioannou, Bled Olympiad 2002: 12...Qa6! 13 Qe5 (13 d5? is crying out to be played but Black seems to be able to steer the game to drawish territory with 13...exd5 14 Qxd5 Qxd5 15 Qxd5 Qxd5 16 Qxe7 Qxe7 17 Wxd8 Nfxd8 18 Nxe7 Qf8 etc.) 13...Qc7 14 Nc3 Qfd5 15 Qxe7 Wxe7 16 Ng3 Nbd8 17 Qd3 f5 18 Qc2 Qe8 19 a3 Qef6 20 Wd2 Qd7!



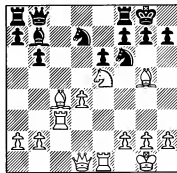
Black has succeeded in nullifying the attack, with d5 still intact and a timely challenge of White's outpost on e5 making the rook look misplaced on g3. There followed an amusing retreat: 21 Qc6 Qxc6 22 Nxc6 Nc8 23 Nxc8 Nxc8 24 Qa6 Nc7 25 Wd1 Q7f6 26 Qd3 Wd7 27 Qb1 Qh8 28 Nd3 Wc8 29 We1 h6 30 Nd1 Wb7 31 Wd2 Nc6 32 Nc1 Wc7 with an advantage to Black.

Finally White has tried 11 We2 Qxc3 12 bxc3 Qbd7 13 Qe5 Wc7 14 Qxd7 Qxd7 15 Na1, e.g. 15...Wc6 16 f3 and now 16...Wd6 followed by bringing a rook to c8 and/or e8 is just one good option available to Black.



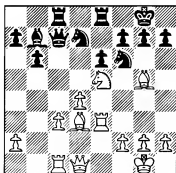
### 11...Qxc3

Inflicting a backward pawn on White before a rook comes to c1. Alternatively there is 11...Qbd7 12 Nc1, when 12...Qxc3 13 Nxc3 makes less sense for Black, e.g. 13...Wb8 14 Qc5!



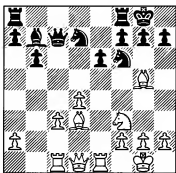
If Black is happy to trade on c3 I don't see the point in waiting to double White's options. Now 14...Wd6 limits Black's disadvantage, while Kumaran-Hellsten, Copenhagen 1996 went 14...Qxe5?! 15 Nxe5 Qe4? (15...Qd7 16 Nc1 Wd6 17 Wg4 is a lesser evil) 16 Wg4! and Black's kingside lacked support: 16...f5 (16...Qxg5? 17 Nxc5 g6 18 Qxe6! fxe6 19 Nxc6+ Qh8 20 Ng7! Qe4 [20...Nf6 21 Ncc7] 21 Ncc7 Ng8 22 Nxc6+ Wxc6 23 Qxe4 and 16...Qxc3 17 Qf6 g6 18 Wg5 are decisive) 17 Qxe6+ Qh8 18 Qxf5 Qxc3 19 bxc3 and Black should soon be forced to play ...Nxf5. Black has a good im-

provement in 12...♞c8 when 13 ♖b3 ♖xc3 14 ♞xc3 h6! 15 ♖h4 ♞e8! 16 ♖b5 ♞xc3 17 bxc3 a6 18 ♖f1 ♞a8 is the best way to address the pin theme. This leaves 13 ♖d3 ♞e8 14 ♞c3!? (14 ♞e2 ♖xc3 15 bxc3 ♞c7 16 ♖h4 ♞d6!? 17 ♖a6 ♞d5 18 ♖xb7 ♞xb7 looks equal) 14...♖xc3 15 bxc3 ♞c7 16 ♖e5



16...g6?! (16..h6) 17 ♖b5! a6 18 ♖xf6 axb5 19 ♖xd7 ♞xd7 20 ♞g4 was good for White in Hagarova-H.Hunt, Zagan 1997.

12 bxc3 ♖bd7 13 ♖d3 ♞c7 14 ♞c1



Not only defending the pawn, the text also supports an advance, when White hopes that the resultant hanging pawns on c4 and d4 will prove a strength rather than a collective weakness. If the former scenario is how you think, then you should be sitting on White's side of the board, whereas Nimzo players should really be looking at these centre pawns with a view to embarrassing them.

#### 14...♞d6

Keeping an eye on d4 and clearing the c-file for a rook. After the sensible 14...♞ac8 White can choose between 15 c4 ♞fe8 16 ♞e2 h6 17 ♖d2 ♖xf3!? 18 ♞xf3 e5 19 d5 or the 'waiting' 15 ♖h4.

15 ♖h4 ♞fc8 16 ♖e5?!

16 ♖g3 ♞a3 was unclear in Gelfand-Karpov, Linares 1994.

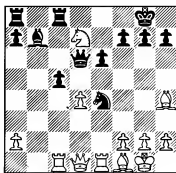
16...♞d5 17 ♖f1 ♖e4?!

Perhaps Black didn't like the look of 17...♞xa2 18 ♖c4 ♖d5 19 ♞a1 but 19...♞xa1 20 ♞xa1 ♖xc4 sees Black establish a grip on the queenside. Instead White should prefer 19 ♖d6 ♞c6 20 ♖g3 with the mess that he was probably looking for with 16 ♖e5.

18 c4 ♞d6 19 c5!?

Also possible is 19 ♖xd7 ♞xd7 20 d5 ♖d6 21 dxc6 fxc6 with a pull for White, but the text is a little more complicated.

19...bxc5 20 ♖xd7



#### 20...cxd4

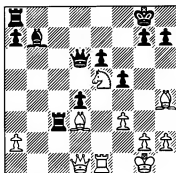
The point of White's play is that 20...♞xd7 now meets with 21 f3 ♖f6 22 dxc5 when the c-pawn grows in stature. However, after Black's next matters are not so clear.

21 ♖d3 f5 22 f3 ♖c3 23 ♞xc3 ♞xc3

23...dxc3? 24 ♖xf5! is best avoided.

24 ♖e5

Black has a rook and two pawns for two pieces but his pawns are blockaded (and divided) and the knight is not going to leave e5.



24...♖ac8 25 ♖d2 ♗a3 26 ♗f1 ♗a4 27 ♗f2 ♗d5?

27...♗d8 must be better.

28 ♗xd4 ♖c2 29 ♗e3 ♖xa2 30 ♖d3 ♗a3 31 ♗e5 ♗d7 32 ♖f4

Suddenly White's pieces are flooding in...

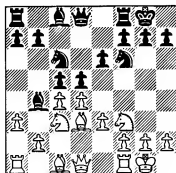
32...♗c7?? 33 ♖c1! 1-0

**(Ultimate) Main Line**

We close with the main line, a variation that seems to be have out-grown itself as easier systems have taken over.

*Game 18*  
**Kramnik-Tiviakov**  
*Wijk aan Zee 2001*

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♖f3 c5 7 0-0 ♖c6 8 a3

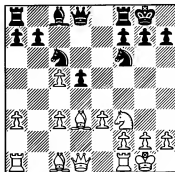


With the stand-off(s) in the centre it is time to resolve the situation now that White has no more constructive moves to make. In inviting the trade on c3 White puts long-term faith in his bishop pair – i.e. his extra potential influence on the dark squares. The configuration of pawns in the centre depends on how Black now responds.

8...♗xc3

The expected course, but Black has alternatives.

8...♗a5 is a semi-bluff in that there remains the intention to play ...♗xc3, but only when White has committed to d4xc5. Indeed this is White's best policy anyway, so after 9 cxd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 we reach the following position:

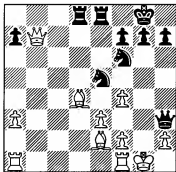


For the moment White's c1-bishop has little to do, Black enjoys more space, fluid development and the superior structure. However, winning back the pawn will give White's pieces time to come to life. The obvious continuation is 11...♗a5 12 ♗c2 ♗xc5 but 13 a4 is rather nice for White: 13...♗a5 14 ♗b1 ♗c7 15 c4 dxc4 16 ♗xc4 ♗d8 17 ♗b2 ♗e7 18 ♗fd1 ♗e6, Sherbakov-Petit, Metz 1994 and now 19 ♗h4! would have secured a promising long-term advantage, e.g. 19...♗xd3 20 ♗xd3 ♗f5 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 ♗db3 ♗xb1 24 ♗xb1 etc.

Instead Black has tried 12...♗g4 13 ♗b1 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♗xc5 15 ♗xb7 when Hansen suggests 15...♖e5 16 ♗e2 ♗c8 17 ♗b4 ♗h3

as providing Black with compensation. This looks feasible, but to what extent is not clear because 18 ♖d1 can be quickly followed by ♜h1 and ♜g1 etc.

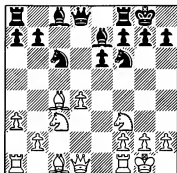
The immediate 11...♙g4 looks better. Then 12 c4 ♜e5 (there is a danger that after 12...d4 13 ♙c2 dxc3 [13...♜e4 14 ♜xd4 ♜c3 15 ♖e1] 14 ♙xc3 the extra squares provided by the extra pawn will prove significant) 13 cxd5 ♙xf3 (13...♖xd5? 14 ♙xh7+ ♜xh7 15 ♖xd5 ♜xf3+ 16 gxf3 ♜xd5 17 fxg4 clearly favours White, while 13...♜xf3+ 14 gxf3 ♙h3 meets with 15 c4!? 14 gxf3 ♖xd5 15 ♙c2 ♖xc5 16 ♙b2 ♜ad8 is typical. In Babula-Yusupov, Solingen 2002 the players decided to split the point after 17 ♖c1 but 17 ♙d4 ♖c8 18 ♖b1 ♜fe8 19 f4 ♖h3 20 ♖xb7 was the more adventurous course taken in Jelen-Dizdar, Portoroz 1987.



Of course if White can hold on to the kingside he is laughing, and the subsequent 20...♙d5 21 f3! ♙xd4 22 exd4 ♜g6 23 ♙c4 ♜xf4 24 ♖xf7+ ♜h8 25 ♙a2 h5 should have brought a smile to White's face, as now even 26 ♖xa7 was on.

8...dxc4 transposes to 8...cxd4, below, after 9 ♙xc4 cxd4 10 exd4 ♙e7 but 9 axb4 cxd4 10 ♙xc4 dxc3 11 ♖xd8 ♙xd8 12 bxc3 is different. Then 12...♜e4 13 b5! ♜e7 14 ♙b2 is easier for the bishops, but 12...b6!? with the idea of posting the knight on a5 after b4-b5 offers Black better equalising prospects.

With 8...cxd4 9 exd4 (9 axb4 dxc4 10 ♙xc4 dxc3 is covered above) 9...dxc4 10 ♙xc4 ♙e7 Black clearly defines his intentions:



It could be argued that Black has made a concession here as the bishop has taken two moves to reach e7, whereas the main line also has some purpose. Play might continue 11 ♙e1 a6 when 12 ♙g5 b5 13 ♙a2 ♙a7! worked out well for Black in Heppekausen-Chlaifer, Germany 1994: 14 ♖d2 (14 d5 ♜xd5 15 ♙xd5 exd5 16 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 17 ♜xd5 ♙xg5 18 ♜xg5 ♜d7 is quite pleasant for Black) 14...♜d7 15 ♙ad1 ♙b7 16 ♙b1 ♖a8 17 ♖c2 g6 etc.

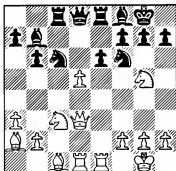
The immediate 12 ♙a2 has more bite, e.g. 12...b5 (12...♖d6 followed by ...♜d8 makes sense) 13 d5! ♜xd5 14 ♜xd5 exd5 15 ♖xd5 ♙b7 16 ♖h5! ♖d6 17 ♙g5 (this achieves more than 17 ♜g5 ♖g6 18 ♖xg6 hxg6 19 ♙f4 with a pull) 17...♜ad8 and now both 18 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 19 ♜g5 ♖g6 20 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 21 ♜xh7 ♜fe8 22 ♜g5 and 18 ♙ac1 ♙xg5 19 ♜xg5 ♖g6 20 ♖h4 ♜d4 21 ♖g3 (with ♙b1 coming) lead to a clear advantage for White.

Another line is 11 ♖d3 b6 12 ♙g5 ♙b7 13 ♜ad1. Black went about setting up his own demise in Khenkin-Portmann, Lucerne 1994: 13...♖c8 14 b4 ♜d8 15 ♜fe1 ♜d7?! 16 d5! ♜b8 17 ♜e5 ♜d8 18 ♜xf7! ♜xf7 19 ♜xe6 ♜d6 20 ♙xf6 ♜xc6 21 dxe6+ ♜xf6 22 ♜d5+ ♙xd5 23 ♙xd5 ♜c6 24 ♖f3+ and the



party was over. Obviously this was poor, but nonetheless serves as another reminder of the devastation White's d-pawn can cause.

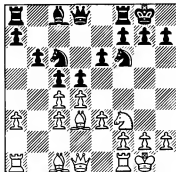
The sensible 13...♞c8 was seen in Milanovic-Martinovic, Belgrade 1998: 14 ♞f1 ♖h5 (14...♗d5 15 ♙xd5 ♙xg5 16 ♙e4 and 15...exd5 16 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 both favour White) 15 ♙c1 ♖f6 16 ♙a2 ♞e8? (16...♗b8 could be called for here) 17 ♖g5! ♙f8 18 d5



From out of nowhere Black's position is falling apart! 18...h6 (18...exd5 19 ♞xe8 ♞xe8 20 ♗xd5) 19 ♗xf7 ♞c7 (19...♗xf7 20 dxe6+ ♗e7 21 ♞g6) 20 dxc6 and Black was in serious trouble.

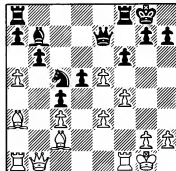
**9 bxc3 dxc4**

Black has two alternatives worth a look. The first is 9...b6



White seems to be able to guarantee a healthy lead after this move thanks to 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♖e5. Then 11...♗xe5 12 dxe5

favours White wherever the knight goes, e.g. 12...♗c4 13 c4 ♙b7 14 ♞c2 ♞h4 15 cxd5 ♙xd5 16 f3, Lukacs-Lengyel, Budapest 1994, 12...♗g4 13 f4 f5 14 ♙e2 ♖h6 15 ♞a2 ♙e6 16 ♞d2 ♞h4?! 17 ♙f3 ♗g4 18 g3 ♞h5 19 ♞c2 ♞ad8 20 ♞fd1 ♞f7 21 h3 ♖h6 22 ♞g2, Korchnoi-Gurgenidze, USSR Championship 1959 and 12...♗d7 13 f4 c4 14 ♙c2 ♗c5 15 a4 ♙b7 16 ♙a3 ♞e7 17 a5 f6 18 ♞b1



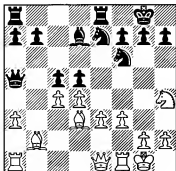
**Gligoric-Pomar, Beverwijk 1967.**

11...♙b7? also looks good for White, e.g. 12 ♙b2 (12 ♗xc6 ♙xc6 13 dxc5? bxc5 14 ♞c2 followed by c3-c4 to get the bishops rolling is a suggestion of Taimanov) 12...c4 13 ♗xc6 ♙xc6 14 ♙c2 ♞e8 15 a4 a5 16 ♞e2 ♞e7 17 ♞fe1 g6 18 f3 Yusupov-Lobron, Munich 1992 is typical of how Black must constantly seek to contain White.

Finally after 11...♞c7 White should avoid 12 f4 ♗e7 13 f5 ♙b7 when ...♗c8-d6 brings too much attention on e4, and opt instead for 12 ♗xc6 ♞xc6 13 f3, e.g. 13...♙e6 14 ♞e1 ♗d7 15 ♞a2 f5 16 h3 c4 17 ♙b1 b5 18 g4 ♖b6 19 ♞g2 ♗d6 20 ♞h4, Taimanov-Bagirov, Tbilisi 1957, 13...♗e8 14 e4 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♞c3 16 ♞b1 ♞xd4+ 17 ♗h1 ♗d6 18 exd5 ♙f5 19 ♙xf5 ♗xf5 20 ♞xd4 ♗xd4 21 ♞d1, Portusch-Pomar, Palma de Mallorca 1966 or 13...a5 14 ♞e2! ♙b7 15 a4 c4 16 ♙c2 ♞fe8 17 ♞f2 ♞e6 18 ♞h4 g6 19 ♙d2 ♖h5 20 ♞ab1, Gligoric-Persitz, Hastings 1968, with a definite lead in all cases.

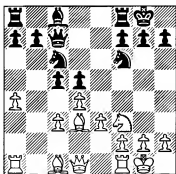
The other try is 9...♞c7, which keeps

White's knight out of e5. Again White should take charge with 10 cxd5! exd5, when White has 11 a4 and 11 ♖h4. I prefer the former as 11 ♖h4 ♖a5 (11...♗e7 also looks comfortable for Black, e.g. 12 a4 ♔c6 13 ♖e1 ♖ac8 14 f3 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♖c3 16 ♔a3 ♖fe8, Van Wely-Khalifman, Wijk aan Zee 2002) 12 ♔b2 ♖e8 13 ♖e1 c4 14 ♔c2 ♗c4 15 ♖c1 ♗d8! and 12 ♖e1 ♖e8 13 ♔b2 ♔d7 14 f3 ♗c7 are typical examples of White's lack of progress with the knight on h4. The timely retreat to d8 with the queen is quite effective, but here, in Sadler-Ehlvest, Groningen 1997 Black wasn't even scared off by the prospect of the position opening up for White's dark squares: 15 c4



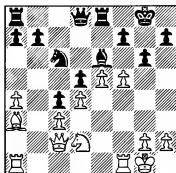
15...♖xe1 16 ♖fxe1 dxc4 17 ♔xc4 ♗ed5 18 ♔xd5 ♗xd5 19 e4 ♗f4 20 dxc5 ♖ac8 with obvious compensation.

Let's have a look at 11 a4:



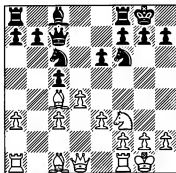
This seems more appropriate than ♖h4 because the situation in the centre needs resolving anyway, and making way for the bishop to come to a3 puts the ball in Black's court. For example 11...c4 12 ♔c2 ♔g4 13 ♖e1 ♔xf3 14 gxf3 ♗d7 15 ♖h1 ♖fe8 16 ♔g1 ♖h8 17 ♖f1 g6 18 ♔g2 loosens Black up a little while keeping him occupied with the e3-e4 break. G.Giorgadze-Dydyshko, Bundesliga 1998 went 18...♖h5 19 e4 ♗c7 20 ♔h6 ♖e6 21 ♖ab1 b6 22 ♔g4 ♖ad8 23 ♖be1 dxe4 24 ♖xe6 fxe6 25 fxe4 ♗g8 26 ♔g5 ♗d7 27 ♔d1 ♖hf6 28 f3 with a clear advantage.

11...♖e8 at least waits for 12 ♔a3 c4 13 ♔c2 ♗e4 14 ♔xe4 (14 ♖e1 stubbornly holds on to the bishop while planning ♖h4, but 14...♗d8! cuts across this plan and equality results from 15 ♔xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♗d2 ♖c8) 14...♖xe4 15 ♗d2 ♖e8 16 e4 ♔e6 (16...dxe4 17 ♖e1 ♔f5 18 ♗xc4 ♖ad8 19 ♗e3 ♔c8 20 ♖h5 ♖a5 21 ♖xa5 ♗xa5 22 d5 b6 23 ♔b4 ♗b7 24 a5 f5 25 axb6 axb6 26 ♖a7 saw White retain his lead in Lautier-Kramnik, Monte Carlo Rapidplay 1998) 17 e5 ♖a5 18 ♖c2 (18 ♖f3? ♗xd4), Van der Sterren-Cifuentes Parada, Dutch Championship 1996, and now Black's best is probably 18...♗d8, when 19 f4 g6 20 f5!?



20...♔xf5 21 ♖xf5 gxf5 22 ♖xf5 ♖e6 23 ♖f1 offers White sufficient pressure for the exchange according to Dautov.

**10 ♔xc4 ♖c7**



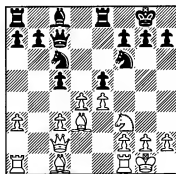
And here we have one of the Big Daddy positions of the Nimzo. Black will acquiesce to an opening of the centre only if there is something in it for him. Otherwise the task is to close out White's bishops and transform the policy of containment into one of domination with the extra knight. Perhaps Black's biggest problem in the diagram position is the sheer number of options now available to White. Some achieve nothing, but they exist all the same, and transpositional possibilities abound, yet Black is completely in the dark as to what will happen next. Moreover it is not as if Black has little choice against 4 e3, or even specific variations involving ...d7-d5, so the lopsided work-results ratio is quite impractical from Black's point of view. As for White, at least if he has come this far in the learning/experience process he can select just one or two options with which to specialise, so what follows will be more useful to the anti-Nimzo league...

### 11 ♖b2

I can't say I'm too keen on 11 ♖b5 compared with alternatives. Franco Ocampos-Vassallo, Lanzarote 2003 went 11...♞d8 12 ♛c2 ♝a5! 13 ♜d3 ♜d7 14 ♝e5 ♞ac8 15 ♜d2 ♞e8 16 f4 e4 17 ♜e2 ♝b3 18 ♞ab1 ♝e4! 19 ♜e1 ♝d6 20 ♝xc4 ♝xc4 21 ♜xc4 ♝xd4 22 cxd4 ♛xc4 23 ♛xc4 ♞xc4 24 ♞xb7 ♞c2 25 ♞b1 ♞dc8 26 ♜b4 ♜c6 and the excitement had ended in equality.

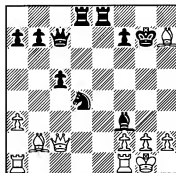
White's aims with 11 ♜d3 are quite differ-

ent in the event of the thematic 11...e5 12 ♛c2 ♞e8 (12...♜g4 13 ♝xc5 ♝xc5 14 dxc5 ♛xe5 15 f3 ♜d7 16 a4 ♞fc8 17 e4 c4 18 ♜e2 ♛c5+ 19 ♝h1 ♞ad8 – Tal – is an edge for White) because 13 e4 seeks a rapid opening of the centre.



Then Black can try 13...c4 14 ♜xc4 exd4 15 cxd4 but might want to avoid 15...♞xe4! 16 ♜d3 ♞e7 17 d5! ♝xd5 (17...♝e5 18 ♝xc5 ♛xc2 19 ♜xc2 ♞xe5 20 d6) 18 ♜xh7+ ♝h8 19 ♜g5 and 15...♝xc4 16 ♜d3 ♝f6 17 ♜g5. Instead 15...♝a5 16 ♜d3 ♛xc2 17 ♜xc2 ♝xc4 18 ♞e1 ♝d6! 19 ♜f4 ♜f5! offers decent prospects of achieving a level game.

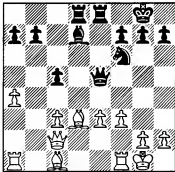
Returning to 13 e4, critical is 13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♜g4 15 e5 ♜xf3 16 exf6 ♝xd4 17 ♜xh7+ ♝h8 18 fxg7+ ♝xg7 19 ♜b2 ♞ad8



Now 20 gxf3 ♞h8 21 ♝h1 ♝f8! will soon favour Black, e.g. 22 ♛e4 f5 23 ♛h4 ♜xh7

and Black's king will prove the safer of the two... However, 20 ♔f5 ♚e2 21 ♔xd4+ ♚xd4 22 ♛c3 keeps the candle burning (at both ends).

Anyway, if this is not your cup of tea there is always 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♛xe5 15 f3 ♔d7 16 a4 ♚ad8 with a balanced game.

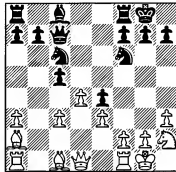


Us humans might be struggling to keep up with oceans of theory, but computers have no problem: HOLMES 8.19b-ANACONDA, Paderborn 2003 saw the soul-less protagonists give the diagram position a vigorous test – 17 ♚e1 ♔c6 18 e4 ♘d5 19 ♔d2 ♘f4 20 ♔f1 e4 21 ♔xf4 ♛xf4 22 ♛f2 ♛e5 23 ♛e3 ♚c6 24 ♔xc4 ♚ed6 25 ♛xa7 ♛xc3 26 ♛c5 ♛f6 27 a5 ♚d2 28 a6 bxa6 29 ♚xa6 ♛h4 30 ♚f1 ♔xc4 31 fxe4 ♚xg2+ 32 ♔xg2 ♛g4+ 33 ♔h1 ♛xe4+ 34 ♔g1 ♛g4+ 35 ♔h1 ♛e4+ 36 ♔g1 ♛g4+ 37 ♔f2 ♛f4+ 38 ♔g1 ♛g4+ with an annoyingly flashy draw.

The modest looking 11 ♔e2 in fact conceals a plan for ambitious expansion, e.g. 11...e5 12 d5 ♚d8 (12...e4 13 dxc6 ♘g4 14 g3 exf3 15 ♔xf3 ♘e5 16 ♔g2 ♘xc6 is level) 13 e4! h6 (13...♘e4? 14 ♛c2) 14 ♛c2 ♘e7 15 c4 ♘g6 16 ♔b2 ♛e7 17 ♚fe1 ♔d7 18 a4 ♘e8 19 g3 ♘h3 20 ♛c3 f6 21 ♛e3 b6 22 ♘d2 and White was in the driving seat in Dumitrache-Vallin, Creon 2000.

Black must not forget about the bishop after 11 ♔a2, e.g. 11...♘a5 12 ♔b2 b5?! 13 a4 b4 14 cxb4 cxb4 15 d5! ♘xd5? 16 ♔xd5 exd5 17 ♛d4 f6 18 ♛xd5+ ♔h8 19 ♛xa8

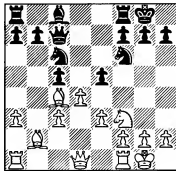
1-0, Mihelakis-Gelashvili, Kavala 1999. The 'main' line runs 11...e5 12 h3 e4 13 ♘h2



This looks odd but ♘g4 is coming: 13...♔f5 14 ♘g4 ♘xg4 15 hxg4 ♔g6 16 a4 followed by ♔a3 and I prefer White.

Meanwhile, placing the bishop on b2 is not as negative as it appears...

#### 11...e5



#### 12 h3!

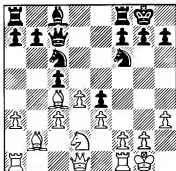
It is surprising how many instances Black makes use of g4. Incidentally White does not want to open the centre automatically just because he owns the bishop pair, e.g. 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 ♔e2 ♚d8 14 ♛c2 ♘fg4 15 ♘xe5 ♛xe5 16 g3 ♔f5 and Black looked menacing in G.Giorgadze-Lesiege, Elista Olympiad 1998.

#### 12...e4

Black obliges, achieving part of the mission. Kaidanov-Lerner, Moscow 2003 saw

12...♙f5 13 ♖c2 ♗ad8 14 ♙b5, the pressure on e5 more worthwhile now that a trade on d4 would enhance the scope of the b2-bishop. Consequently there followed 14...c4 15 ♘d2 ♘a5 16 c4 cxd4 17 exd4 ♘d7 18 ♗e3 a6 19 ♙xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♗ac1 ♖b6 21 ♙c3 ♘c6 22 d5 ♗xe3 23 fxe3 ♘e7 24 ♘d3 with a clear advantage to White.

13 ♘d2

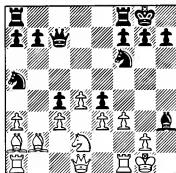


13...♘a5

13...♙f5 14 ♖e2 ♗ae8 15 ♙a2 ♗d7 16 ♗fe1 and now in Johannessen-Jenni, Baden-Baden 2002 Black sought an ostensibly favourable trade with 16...♙e6!, but after 17 ♙xe6 ♗xe6 18 ♘b3 cxd4 19 exd4 ♗e7 20 c4 it was White's other bishop that was ready to enter the game.

14 ♙a2 ♙f5

A different kind of game results from 14...c4?, e.g. 15 f3 ♙xh3?

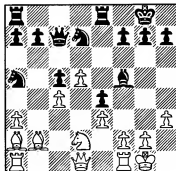


16 ♘xe4 (16 gxf3 ♗g3+) 16...♘xe4 17 fxe4 ♗g3 18 ♖f3 ♗xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♙g4 20 ♗f2 f6 21 ♗af1 ♗fe8 22 ♙b1 and if anyone was better it was White in Babula-Luther, Bundesliga 2002.

15 c4 ♗fe8 16 d5

The point. White's light-squared bishop can more easily relocate than its partner.

16...♘d7



Both sides appear to be getting what they want – White has found a diagonal and some space in the centre, while Black has erected a blockade of sorts. The latest plan is to send the knight to d6 via b6 and c8 – hence White's next.

17 f4!

The idea is to keep Black's pieces out of e5, thus keeping the long diagonal open for the bishop, which could then combine with a bayonet attack involving g2-g4 etc.

17...exf3

Black, understandably, does not want to allow this plan, although the price is further open lines.

18 ♗xf3 ♙g6 19 h4

Suddenly White's initiative is beginning to gain momentum.

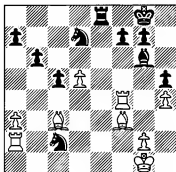
19...h5

19...♘e5 20 ♗g3 is awkward for Black.

20 ♙b1! ♗d6 21 ♙c3 b6 22 ♘e4 ♗xe4

22...♙xe4?? loses to 23 ♗xf7+, while 22...♖e7 23 ♘g5 ♗xe3+ 24 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 25 ♙xg6 f6 26 ♗f7! is given by Wells.

23 ♖xe4 ♕xc4 24 ♖f4 ♖xf4 25 ♖xf4  
 ♕xe3 26 ♖f3 ♕c2 27 ♖a2 ♖e8



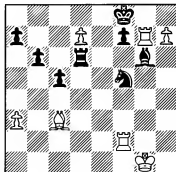
Black has two pawns for the exchange and good pieces, but White's bishops have more room than at any time during the game thus far, and such conditions afford him the luxury of continued aggression.

28 g4! hxg4 29 ♖xg4 ♕e5 30 d6! ♕xg4

31 ♖xg4 ♖e6

White threatened ♖xg6 followed by ♖xc2, and 31...♕e3 walks into a pin after 32 ♖c2.

32 h5 ♖d3 33 d7 ♖d6 34 ♖xg7+ ♖f8 35 h6 ♕d4 36 ♖ag2 ♖g6 37 ♖f2! ♕f5 38 h7 1-0



An excellent final position with which to end the book!

# INDEX OF VARIATIONS

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## Black Plays 4...b6

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♝c3 ♜b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♜d3

5 ♞e2 ♜a6

5...♜b7 8

5...♞e4

6 ♜d2 26; 6 ♜c2 26; 6 f3 29

6 a3

6...♜xc3+ 17; 6...♜e7 17

5...♜b7 6 ♟f3 0-0

6...♞e4 7 0-0

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9 a3 64

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1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♝c3 ♜b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♞e2

5 ♜d3 ♞c6 6 ♟f3 ♜xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 8 0-0

8 e4 e5 9 d5 ♞e7 106

8...e5

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6...0-0 7 a3  $\text{e}7$

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7 c5  $\text{e}4$

7...e5 87

8  $\text{d}2$  87; 8 g3 88

**7... $\text{xc}3+$**

7... $\text{e}7$  8 c5

8...a5 80; 8...b6 81

**8  $\text{xc}3$  74**

**Black Plays 4...0-0**

**1 d4  $\text{f}6$  2 c4 e6 3  $\text{c}3$   $\text{b}4$  4 e3 0-0 5  $\text{d}3$**

5  $\text{e}2$  d5

5... $\text{e}8$  126

6 a3  $\text{e}7$

6... $\text{d}6$  128

7 cxd5

7  $\text{f}4$  128; 7  $\text{g}3$  128

7... $\text{xd}5$  126; 7...exd5 129

**5...d5 6  $\text{f}3$**

6 cxd5 135

6  $\text{e}2$  c5

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7 cxd5

7 0-0 139

7...cxd4 8 exd4  $\text{xd}5$  135

**6...c5 7 0-0  $\text{c}6$**

7...dxc4 8  $\text{xc}4$  cxd4

8... $\text{d}7$  144; 8... $\text{bd}7$  145; 8... $\text{e}7$  145

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**9 bxc3 dxc4**

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**10  $\text{xc}4$   $\text{c}7$  150**



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# the nimzo-Indian rubinstein

The Nimzo-Indian Defence continues to be one of Black's most popular and respected defences to queen's pawn openings and finding an antidote for White has proved to be a difficult task for even the strongest players in the world. One of the most straightforward replies is the Rubinstein Variation (4 e3), in which White ignores Black's 'threats' and instead simply gets on with the process of developing his remaining pieces. This plan has found favour with many top players; indeed, World Champion Vladimir Kramnik used it to defeat Garry Kasparov in just 25 moves in their 2000 match in London.

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